Labour Monthly

EDITED BY R. PALME DUTT

TWENTY YEARS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

AUGUST 1940 SIXPENCE

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LABOR MONTHLY

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LABOUR MONTHLY

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CONTENTS

Page

Notes of the Month 419
TWENTY YEARS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY
By R. P. D.

The Fight for the Communist Party 426
By W. GALLACHER, M.P.

Twice Two are a Tallow Candle 431
By R. PAGE ARNOT

The Communists and the Labour Movement 436
By H. A. GEORGE

What the Communist Party has meant to me 441
1. *By* COUN. JACK DAVIES
2. *By* HELEN CRAWFURD
3. *By* MAURICE DOBB
4. *By* J. R. SCOTT

The U.S.S.R. Makes Sure 449
By QUÆSTOR

Women in Unrest, 1914-1918 458
By BERYL STANLEY

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Robert Dell

Those readers who remember the brilliant exposures of British imperialist policy which appeared in our pages in the spring of 1937 *and* 1938, *over the signature of Robert Dell, will share the deep regret of the Editorial Board at the disappearance of such a courageous figure from international politics. Trained by his upbringing, his environment, his aesthetic experience to be a servant of capitalism, Robert Dell found the strength in his own independence of mind, fearlessness and early contacts with English revolutionary Socialism fifty years ago to rebel against the capitalists. For many years, in his messages to the "Manchester Guardian" from international meetings at Geneva and elsewhere, Dell boldly tore the mask from the ugly face of British imperialism, and supported the fight of the Soviet Union for peace. He did so as a Victorian Radical, not as a Communist: and the measure of the difference was his failure to understand the present war. This led him away, at the close of his life, from the battle which he had conducted for so many years, and drowned his voice in the chorus of ignorant vituperation of the Soviet Union which Dell's worst enemies organised after September*, 1939. *In truth Dell had disappeared as a fighter some ten months before his physical death. It is the memory of the fighter which we honour.*

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Notes of the Month

Twenty Years of the Communist Party—From the First to the Second Imperialist War—The Foundation of the Communist Party—The Answer to a Historic Bankruptcy—A New Departure—The Shattering of Illusions—Organisation and Leadership—A Living Growth—The Old and the New—A Revolutionary Epoch—The Conception of the Party—A Life-and-Death Question—Internationalism—Dead Controversies—Communism Comes into Its Own—The Unity of the Mass Movement and Communism

THE Twentieth Anniversary of the Communist Party takes place in a situation which justifies all the teachings of Communism and in which the salvation of humanity depends on the leadership of Communism. The present is no time for idle commemorations. But this Twentieth Anniversary of the Communist Party is no idle commemoration: it is the sharpest reminder of the most urgent lessons and needs which go to the heart of the present situation, and of issues which hold in the scales the balance of life or death for millions of human beings and for the future of human society. In other times this Twentieth Anniversary might have been celebrated with greater freedom of pageantry and processions, with larger amplitude of unhindered demonstrations to testify the enthusiasm of the working class for its political party, forged through two decades of struggle, and its daily paper maintained in the teeth of a thousand obstacles. But the storm and stress of the present period is in reality the best and truest setting for this Twentieth Anniversary. The Communist Party was born out of the deep crisis of the old society and the old Labour Movement which began with the first imperialist war. It enters on its Twentieth Anniversary in the midst of the second imperialist war and visibly developing new world revolutionary wave which bears on its crest the issue of capitalism or socialism for the leading countries of the world. The Communist Party approaches its greatest tasks for which all these twenty years have been a preparation. To turn aside for a moment from comment on the current flux of events in order to draw the lessons of these twenty years is not in fact to draw aside from the current situation, but to draw closer to it. The completion of these twenty years affords the occasion, not for retrospect—there is no time for this—but for a mountain-top view of the whole epoch through which we have travelled and are travelling, in order to burn out all pettiness and weakness of vision and temper, and illuminate anew with greater certainty and confidence than ever before our historic road.

THE Communist Party was the child of the general crisis of capitalism which began with the war of 1914 and has developed continuously since. The war of 1914 not only demonstrated the bankruptcy of the old capitalist society which was rotten-ripe for destruction and for the transition to socialism. It also demonstrated the bankruptcy of the old labour movement

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which was incapable of carrying through the necessary change. The present war of 1939 broke upon a world which had already lost all confidence in stability, was growing hardened to violence and catastrophic change, and was profoundly conscious of the revolution maturing and advancing in its midst. The transition from the partial state of war preceding 1939 to the extended war which opened in 1939 and which only stage by stage unfolded its character and is now developing toward world war, was not a sudden break, but a step in a continuous process, and not an unexpected step. But the war of 1914 was a real watershed dividing the old and the new. It broke upon a world in which all sections save the revolutionary Marxists were completely unconscious of the character of the historical epoch in which they were living, were swimming in a sea of illusions, and for whom the outbreak of war and its consequences came like the end and the shattering of the whole world they had known.

It is only necessary to survey the pre-1914 literature of the British Labour Movement, of the Fabians and liberal-socialists who dominated its ideology and guided its leadership, to realise the bland, complacent self-satisfied blindness and fantastic inappropriateness of its world conception (or rather, absence of any world conception save the philistine assumption of the permanence of the institutions within which its pretty schemes of reforms were elaborated) in contrast to the realities which followed. Only revolutionary Marxism correctly diagnosed the epoch and—in the one country where it led the labour movement—rode the storm. In the other countries the war was a shattering blow which compelled a complete new facing of the problems of the labour movement. The outcome of this new awakening was the foundation of the Communist Party. The very conditions of the preceding epoch which had been correctly diagnosed by Marxism had at the same time corrupted and undermined its influence in the labour movement. Therefore the first imperialist war, which should have led—had the subjective conditions been ready—to the victory of the working class revolution in all the countries of Europe, could only lead to the first step, the re-awakening and organisational separation of revolutionary Marxism in preparation for what was to follow. It remains for the second imperialist war to complete the process in the realm of action.

The foundation of the Communist Party was thus the answer of the militant working class to a historic bankruptcy, and the one positive outcome achieved by the working class in the capitalist world from the war of 1914 and the defeat of the revolutionary strivings which followed it. The Communist Party was founded in 1920. It was founded, that is to say, *after* the completion of the first imperialist war, and *after* the revolutionary wave which followed the war had already reached its highest point and was approaching its ebb. The establishment of the Councils of Action in August, 1926, which coincided with the foundation of the Communist Party, and which openly challenged the power of the British capitalist State and Government and forced its temporary retreat from its war plans against the Russian Workers' State, was the last high point of the revolutionary wave which followed the war. Thereafter followed the economic crisis and mass unemployment which began in the winter of 1920, and the low point of Black Friday in the spring of 1921.

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In the first number of the LABOUR MONTHLY, which appeared in July, 1921, the lessons of Black Friday were still the centre of discussion. The Communist Party thus came into existence *at the close of a revolutionary period*, not at its opening. It could not lead the revolutionary movement which followed the war. It could only draw and embody the lessons for the future. Hence the long period of upward struggle through which it had to pass before the situation began to open out anew. Hence the significance of the present anniversary which falls in the midst of the new cycle of wars and revolutions now developing.

ALL the lessons of the preceding years were embodied in the foundation of the Communist Party. The war of 1914 had shattered the illusions of peaceful progress within capitalist society. It had proved in the eyes of all thoughtful workers the complete and unmitigated failure of the old forms and leadership of the labour movement, which had neither been able to prevent the mutual slaughter of millions of workers, nor to utilise the resultant crisis to lead the rising anger and struggle of the workers against capitalism, but had actually become the bulwark of capitalism against the working class. It became clear that a new departure was necessary, that the problem of a political party of the working class capable of leading the struggle against capitalism had not been solved by the foundation of the Labour Party, but had still to be solved.

IN the long preceding period of relatively peaceful legal conditions in the metropolitan centres of imperialism (with the wars and open violence transferred to the colonial periphery, only later to return from thence with a hundredfold increased intensity), the whole routine, organisation, outlook and leadership of the traditional labour movements of the leading countries of imperialism had become intertwined with the old corrupt dying society, and therefore completely incapable of conducting a basic offensive against it when the need arose. The war of 1914 dealt a shattering blow (though not yet the final blow) to the illusions which had overgrown and permeated the old labour movement. It laid bare the jungle-horrors of the dying capitalist régime dragging mankind into the abyss. It revealed with burning illumination (later to be reinforced by the example of the Russian Revolution) the task of international socialism, of the working class revolution, as the only power to save mankind.

BUT the shattering of old illusions and the laying bare of the only path forward did not and could not of itself create the readiness and capacity of the working class to fulfil its historic rôle, where the working class had not evolved beforehand the requisite *organisation* and *leadership* for the achievement of its revolutionary task. Only in that country where, owing to a series of exceptional conditions (including the weakness of imperialism and the strength of revolutionary traditions), the working class had been able to evolve beforehand its revolutionary Marxist party and leadership, closely linked up with and leading the mass movement, only there was the working class able to conquer power and advance to socialism. In the other countries the experience of the war and of the years succeeding the war was an experience of defeat. The militant workers drew the lesson. In Britain and in every

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country the militant workers in the post-war period set themselves the task of building their Communist Party.

THE significance of the foundation of the Communist Party in Britain in 1920, as the most important step of the militant workers since the days of Chartism to break decisively with the weaknesses of the intervening period of the labour movement and lead the way forward to the working class revolution, will be finally proved, not by assertion, but by the only valid test—the historical outcome. Because the Communist Party was a living growth, a living expression and outcome of the whole preceding experience of the working class movement, therefore the Communist Party did not come into being ready-formed and complete, but grew out of the preceding elements and groupings with all their weaknesses who still only partially expressed the striving of the working class towards revolutionary policy and organisation, and had to find its way forward through struggle, through mistakes, through trial and error, to forge the first nucleus of a revolutionary party of the working class. The history of this process, which is still going forward to its final completion, is the history of these two decades, which are rich in a thousand experiences of the forming and moulding from the original heterogeneous elements a disciplined and experienced political vanguard of the working class.

THE Communist Party was at once a re-assertion of all that was best and strongest in the traditions of the old working class movement, and a decisive break with all the enemy influences, imperialist corruption and political and organisational vices which were strangling the old movement. It was a re-assertion of the revolutionary traditions and aspirations which in the days of Chartism had placed the British working class in the vanguard of the international working class and had helped to form the theory of Marx and Engels, and which in the subsequent period had been temporarily suffocated by the corruption of the capitalist world monopoly. It was a re-assertion of the aims and strivings of the early socialist pioneers, of whom the best and truest representative, Tom Mann, carried forward the banner to his honoured place on the Central Committee of the Communist Party. It was a re-assertion of the programme of Marxism, which had been thrust aside by the miserable tenth-rate substitutes of Fabianism, MacDonaldism and similar milk-and-water rehashes of liberal capitalist humbug. It was a re-assertion of the militancy and class-conscious awakening which had been expressed in the pre-1914 labour unrest and in the shop steward movement during the war. It was a break with the liberal-labour corruption, the parliamentary cretinism, the narrow craft trade unionism and sectionalism, the jingoism, white chauvinism and national insularity, the snobbery and tailing after the capitalist class, which had disgraced the dominant sections of the old labour movement and brought it to impotence and disaster.

THE founders and early builders of the Communist Party were inspired by the new basic conceptions which their whole experience of the preceding years had taught them. They understood that the epoch which had opened with the war of 1914 was a revolutionary epoch; that imperialism could offer nothing but chronic decay, deepening crises, wars and catastrophe for mankind; that

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the task before the working class was the task of destroying capitalism and establishing their own revolutionary dictatorship in order to build socialism with the minimum of delay and suffering; and that every phase and aspect of the working class struggle and every section of the working class army needed to be subordinated to this supreme aim. Had that understanding been shared by the whole working class movement two decades ago, had the lying deceptions of capitalist revival and reconstruction, stabilisation, Fordism, Mondism, organised capitalism, and inevitability of gradualness and all the rest of the infamous frauds and quackery to conceal the real decay been thrust aside, it would be a different situation to-day.

SECOND, they understood that the working class could only unite its ranks, conquer capitalism, win and maintain power, and construct socialism by means of and under the leadership of a centralised revolutionary political party of the working class, based on the theory of Marxism, drawing into its ranks all the most resolute, courageous and politically enlightened class-conscious workers, building and training the vanguard, rooted in the factories and in the mass organisations of the working class, linked with the mass movement and with all sections of the working people in every phase of the struggle, capable of defending the everyday interests of the working people and advancing to the defeat of capitalism and the final victory of socialism.

THEY understood that the question of building such a party is in the present epoch a life-and-death question for the labour movement. They understood that the old loose "trinity" of the sectional trade unions with their narrow economist outlook, of the federal Labour Party based on the trade unions and with its theoretical anarchy at the mercy of every capitalist influence, and of the co-operatives dominated by capitalist "business" conceptions, was incapable of standing up to the powerful centralised machine of modern monopoly capital and its State; and that all these sections of the working class could only realise their rôle and become part of an integrated working class movement through the leadership of a Marxist party of the working class able to draw together every section in a common aim and strategy. The whole history of these twenty years, of the Parliamentary Labour Party, of the two Labour Governments, of the betrayal of the General Strike, of the record of the General Council, of the economic and political defeats and strengthening of capitalist reaction, have proved the truth of this.

THIRD, they understood that the struggle of the working class is to-day in the fullest and most practical sense international: that "socialism in Europe has outlived that comparatively peaceful stage when it was confined within the narrow boundaries of nationality" (Lenin); that only the unity of the working class in all the capitalist countries together with the colonial peoples can defeat the power of imperialism; and that the party of the working class requires to be an international party, not a loose federal association of autonomous units tied to their different capitalist masters and flying asunder at the first touch of crisis, but a centralised international party under a single centralised leadership. The truth of this has been abundantly demonstrated through these twenty years, and is most powerfully demonstrated to-day in the present war. The phantom of a reconstructed Second International which

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dragged along a tenuous ghostly existence during these two decades has not merely collapsed with the present war; it has gone right out of business, and lost even the show of a basis of organisation, now that the French partner has joined up with fascism (the entry of Belin, Assistant Secretary of the C.G.T., into the Pétain Government). The Communist International not only goes forward united and strong, and with increased strength, in the storm of the war. It is to-day the only international organisation in the world, with sections in every country and corner of the globe following a single leadership and a single policy: the sole unifying force of the human race and triumphant demonstration of working class internationalism in the midst of the chaos of world anarchy: the hope of mankind.

ALL these basic conceptions of the Communist Party have had to battle a long and steadily winning battle against the myriad deeply ingrained illusions, confusions and distortions of the old labour movement. All have been justified and vindicated by the whole history of these two decades. An enormous and now antiquated controversy followed the first foundation of the Communist Party. Revolution or gradual reform; working class dictatorship or evolutionary socialism; civil war or peaceful progress: these were the themes propounded by the pundits of the Labour Party and the Independent Labour Party, the MacDonalds and Snowdens (whose second-rate progeny now occupy the seats of leadership of the Labour Party). With sanctimonious superiority the champions of capitalist influence in the labour movement, before finally joining up with the Conservative Party, denounced Communism and communist policy; they derided the revolutionary romanticism of the Communists, and proclaimed that the ebb of the revolutionary tide proved that revolution was an obsolete anachronism; they painted glowing pictures of the glorious future opening out before capitalism on the basis of the new technical advance and higher organised development; they demonstrated how capitalism was becoming daily more democratic and how all progress must be gradual; with odd reminiscences of student courses in biology they disproved Marxism; they inveighed against the horrors of bloodshed and civil war, and when Lenin warned the British workers to prepare for a perspective, not of easy parliamentary victories, but of heavy civil war, they licked their lips and felt that their case was proved and that in the eyes of all sober intelligent god-fearing citizens Communism was revealed as a nightmare.

TO-DAY these controversies are dead: capitalism itself has killed them. The authors of the "British school of socialism" went to their last home in the House of Lords and ended up as protagonists of a Tory Government imposing the Means Test on the workers in order to hold together the shattered fabric of capitalism in crisis. Their idyllic vision of the peaceful progress of democratic capitalism has vanished into limbo, as democracy has given place to fascism in country after country, and capitalism leads the world in the devil's dance of barbarism and mass murder. Who dares now paint the horrors of working class revolution, which could have long ago won peace and freedom for all peoples, when capitalism soaks the earth with the bloodshed of a new world war, and the sober intelligent God-fearing citizens scurry to their non-existent shelters from the rain of death of the bombing planes? Who dares now rattle the spectre of civil war when even the sorry apologists

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of imperialist war seek to glorify their hideous holocaust for the profit of the millionaires with the lying appellation of an "international civil war"? In the wake of carnage the shadow of famine descends over Western Europe. Only in Eastern Europe Communism has brought peace, stability and abundance. The wheel has come full circle. The task of revolution was not avoided by evading it. It returns with all the greater insistence, the longer it is postponed. Every prophecy, prediction and warning of Communism has been fulfilled. In the midst of the storm of war and the break-up of the old capitalist order Communism comes into its own, and is revealed as the only path of freedom, peace and sanity for the world.

To-day in consequence we draw the lessons of this anniversary, not in dwelling on the past, but in looking to the present and the future. All these twenty years have only been preparation for the greatest tasks and responsibilities that now fall to the working class and the Communist Party in this deepest crisis of the capitalist order which is tearing the world to pieces in the present war. Will the working class of Britain, of France, of Germany be ready and able in time to accomplish their task before the deepest abyss of destruction, misery and enslavement has been reached? Will they prevail to win the way from this war to the victory of the working class and socialism? This is the one question which matters to-day, which dominates every other. The answer to this question will only be determined in action. This we know: there is no other way out; every delay only brings greater suffering and makes more urgent and insistent the task. Every development of the crisis of capitalism makes more emphatic the need of a powerful Communist Party leading the mass movement as the vital need of the whole labour movement. We have already had to pay dear for the absence of such a mass Communist Party leading the labour movement in this country. It has already cost two wars; and this is not the end, till the lesson be learned. In the midst of the conditions of war we need more than ever to build up the strength of the Communist Praty. We need to awaken the whole working class movement to independence and renewed struggle. Widely and still more widely our agitation on all the burning issues, great and small, which face the people to-day needs to reach out to all sections and build up the united movement of the people led by the working class. In the conditions of war, courageous struggle, initiative, limitless energy and sacrifice, confidence in the strength of the workers, the spirit that gives way before no obstacles—these are the conditions of victory. The Communists need to be able to guide the mass movement stage by stage, from the first beginnings of confused awakening and groping, to understand the feelings of the people, to express their real deepest aspirations against the lies and distortions of the official propaganda, to advance those slogans which carry forward the movement at the given stage of development, which awaken the consciousness of the people, tear down illusions, lay bare the gulf between the interests of the people and the ruling class, and build up the unity and solidarity of the working people to defend their own interests and advance to take their fate into their own hands. The unity of the mass movement and Communism—herein lies the urgent need of the labour movement, the one way forward, the solution of all the problems which to-day more than ever before carry with them the issues of life or death for the people.

R. P. D.

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The Fight for the Communist Party

BY W. GALLACHER, M.P.

THE STORY OF the foundation of the Communist Party is the story of a long and tenacious struggle of the militant workers to overcome many obstacles and reach unity of programme, organisation and an effective revolutionary leadership.

The war of 1914 exposed the rottenness of the leadership of the Labour movement in this country, who deserted their pledges to fight against war and for the overthrow of the capitalist class if war broke out, and became recruiting agents for the capitalist warmakers.

This rottenness was shared by the majority of the parties of the whole Second International. The only party that stood firm as a whole against the shock of war was the party of Lenin, the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (Bolshevik) which led the victorious October Revolution of the Russian working class. In all other cases the Social Democrats became Social Chauvinists. Only small groups in the other countries were left to carry on the revolutionary traditions of the First International. Right away Lenin saw the need for rebuilding the International but on this occasion purged of opportunism.

Following the October Revolution the decisive steps were taken to achieve this end. In order to disassociate the revolutionary movement from the discredited Social Democrats, the name of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (Bolshevik) was changed to that of the Communist Party. This was followed by the calling of the first Congress of the Communist International which met in Moscow in 1919. In the circumstances only a limited number of delegates were able to attend; but the first step had been taken towards the union of the revolutionary workers in all countries in the new revolutionary working-class International.

In Britain, as in other countries, the experience of the war of 1914 and of the bankruptcy of the old Labour movement, and the revolutionary awakening that followed, drew together the militant workers. United in the struggle against the old treacherous leaders, and inspired by the example of the victorious October Revolution, the militant workers united after the war to found the first revolutionary party of the working class, the Communist Party.

There had previously existed in Britain a number of small Socialist organisations which sought to base themselves on the programme of Marxism.

The principal of these groups was the British Socialist Party, which up until the outbreak of war had been under the domination of H. M. Hyndman, a notorious bourgeois corruptor of Marxism.

But with the war a split took place, Hyndman and a minority going over to the Imperialists, while the majority with Albert Inkpin as Secretary did their best, considering the evil influences with which the Party had been for years corroded, to maintain a front against the warmakers.

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Then there was a "Left" group in the I.L.P. which produced such good comrades as Saklatvala and Ernest and Isabel Brown, but which also imposed on us the unpalatable liability of Walton Newbold.

The S.L.P., a severely doctrinaire party with a policy which had been formulated by the very confused American "Marxist" De Leon, was also split. Such active spirits as Arthur McManus, Tommy Bell, Willie Paul and T. A. Jackson were for unity and the formation of a Communist Party, while the more doctrinaire members, including the majority of the Executive Committee, were against.

Another small group, but one which was exceptionally vocal, was the "Workers' Dreadnought" group. The "Workers' Dreadnought" was a weekly paper under the control of Sylvia Pankhurst. Associated with this group was a semi-anarchist group in Wales.

Of vital importance for the establishment of a Party in this country was the widespread shop steward movement that had gained such influence during the war. The shop stewards represented the militant industrial workers, but their outlook was confused. This confusion arose in their reaction against the opportunism of the Labour Party leadership. In the war years the "Politicians", as the Labour members of Parliament were called, were so helpless and so useless where they weren't openly treacherous that the shop stewards began to idealise "industrial" action in opposition to "political" action. This developed in the Clyde area into Anti-Parliamentarism and in London, where Anarchist influence was strong, into Syndicalism.

In Scotland, the outstanding revolutionary, John McLean, was nominally a member of the B.S.P. (as I was). But with his strong Scottish traditions he was against the "Gang" in London. (He had always been a strong opponent of Hyndman and his associates, the corruptors of Marxism.) McLean's influence was thrown into the balance, not for a Communist Party of Great Britain but for a separate Communist Party in Scotland.

These were the principal organisations and groups whose coming together prepared the way for the Communist Party. As a result of conversations and negotiations that had gone on for many months, a Conference was called for July 31st and August 1st, in Cannon Street Hotel, London.

The foundation of the Communist Party thus represented at the outset a coming together of many diverse streams and elements, whose differences could only be overcome and fused into a single revolutionary party through a series of struggles in the ensuing period. In addition, in the wake of the revolutionary tide during the years after the war, a number of politically unstable elements temporarily attached themselves to the Party, such as C. L'Estrange Malone, Robert Williams, A. A. Purcell, W. Mellor, Ellen Wilkinson and W. N. Ewer, who did their best to destroy the Party.

The first Conference of the Communist Party was a great step forward and a historical landmark in that it brought into being the Communist Party. But the variety of elements represented at this first Conference, the confusion of outlooks, and the dangerous influences of the "saboteurs and wreckers" made the work of the Conference very difficult. Only the revolutionary enthusiasm of the delegates made it possible to overcome these handicaps. Worthy of special mention in the fight to establish a real Bolshevik party was our Comrade Bob Stewart. I was not present at the Conference.

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I was not a party to, or a supporter of, the Conference, but on all hands I heard of the able, inspiring speech of Bob Stewart and of the stirring effect it had on the main body of delegates present.

The decisions were taken in the form of resolutions: first that the Communist Party of Great Britain be formed, adhere to the Communist International and second that an application should be made for affiliation to the Labour Party.

While this was going on I was over in Moscow at the Second Congress of the Communist International. I represented the Clyde Workers' Committee and, as I have already said, we were Anti-Parliamentarian and opposed to the unity movement going on in London.

Jack Tanner, who is now President of the A.E.U., was also there. He was representing the Shop Stewards in London. At that time he had strong syndicalist tendencies which brought him into conflict with those who believed in developing the unions along their present lines.

Mr. Tanner is now horrified at the perfidy of the Pétain Government and just a little suspicious that there might be those in this country who would be equally treacherous, but he conveniently forgets that he is now head of the "Government" of the A.E.U. and that his "Government" is proposing to expel some of the best Union members for daring to associate with, or speak to, the National Council of Aircraft Shop Stewards. According to the letter sent to these members, by this association they are seeking to "destroy trade unionism". If that has any meaning, then it follows that the President of the A.E.U. has spent most of his life trying to destroy the trade union movement. This is an example of what can happen when ingrained opportunism leads them into the camp of the bourgeoisie.

But in Moscow the question of the newly-formed party in London came up for very sharp discussion. I said that we were going to form a separate party in Scotland from which the opportunists and parliamentarians would be completely excluded. Already before I had arrived Lenin had published his book, *Left-Wing Communism—An Infantile Disorder*, and as I got particular mention in it they were all ready waiting for me.

Day after day we argued and fought around the question of the formation of a party, of revolutionary parliamentarianism and of the role of the Labour Party and the necessity for affiliation. On all of these questions my sectarianism brought me into bitter conflict with all the leading comrades and then as the days passed into bitter conflict with myself. It isn't easy, when you are confident that you are absolutely right, to face the realisation that you have been holding on to a quite untenable position.

But, however harsh or personal the discussions might become, Lenin never lost his patience or spared his kindly comradeship to help us out of difficulties. He was a comrade to all of us in the deepest and truest meaning of the word. A ready smile, a kindly word, but always insistence on revolutionary understanding. I said to my comrades when I returned that when you spoke to Lenin you couldn't think of Lenin, he made you think of what he was thinking of, and at all times he was thinking of the advance of the revolutionary movement.

After hard battles with the other comrades and a still harder battle with myself, I recognised where I had gone all wrong and promised on my return

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to join the newly-formed party in Britain and to do my best to persuade my Scottish comrades to join up also.

When I got back to Scotland I was in time to attend a Conference in the Central Hall, Glasgow, called for the purpose of forming "The Communist Labour Party of Scotland". While the official group of the Socialist Labour Party was represented at this conference with the hope of making C.L.P. a new edition of S.L.P., the strongest personality in the leadership of the Conference was my old and much esteemed comrade J. V. Leckie. With his able assistance, after I had made a report on the Second Congress, I succeeded in getting the Conference to decide on unity with the newly-formed C.P.G.B.

To make this unity effective a Unity Conference was held in Leeds in January, 1921. The Scottish lads insisted in nominating me for President against Arthur McManus, who had been appointed President at the Cannon Street Conference. This was a mistake, as we were in considerable minority and according to the rules it prevented me from being nominated for the central committee.

However, the Unity Conference passed through fairly successfully and the united party got under way. But the real unity of a centralised Bolshevik Party was not yet achieved. There was not yet real unity of outlook and policy; there were still confusionist, opportunist and sectarian tendencies in the leadership and membership; and the organisation was still federal in character and carrying on the traditions of the old Social Democratic Parties. The Party had from the outset to struggle against the dangerous opportunist and unstable elements which played an active role in the early leadership. Owing to these difficulties the Party was faced with very grave dangers in its early period. The policy of the Party was being twisted and distorted; the early revolutionary enthusiasm of the Party was stifled and thwarted; and throughout 1921 instead of advancing, the membership of the Party showed a decline.

At the same time Government persecutions, wholesale arrests of members and victimisation, added to the difficulties of the Party. In the summer of 1921 the headquarters were raided and the Secretary, Albert Inkpin, was arrested and later sentenced to six months' imprisonment. But this check had its advantageous side. The unstable elements hurried to leave the Party in the ensuing period.

While the raid was taking place I was myself in prison, in Birmingham. I had been sentenced to three months for seditious language in connection with the "Black Friday" betrayal of the miners.

Shortly after I came out of prison the Central Committee took a decision to make me Vice-President of the Party and to invite me to work at the Party centre to help in getting the Party on its feet again.

With Albert Inkpin in prison and McManus and Tommy Bell away at the C.I., I was left to carry on as best I could with the acting secretary. We formed a sub-committee of the C.C., the first tentative approach to a Political Bureau. We worked hard to pull things together but it was a very difficult task. The membership was rapidly fading away, the finances of the Party were chaotic and the organisation had almost completely broken down.

Early in 1922 I made a report to the Central Committee. I spared no one. The situation in the party was so grave that urgent steps had to be taken, if we were to hold together. I proposed that a small commission be appointed

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to make a ruthless examination into every phase of party work with especial reference to the party leadership.

Some of the "Guilty Men" tried to block this, but the St. Pancras Conference of the Party in the spring of 1922 adopted a resolution for the appointment of such a small commission, to be drawn from outside the ranks of the Executive.

Early in 1920, before I left for Moscow, I attended a Conference where for the first time I met Brailsford and I was immediately struck by his hopeless confusion of mind. When he spoke he argued for and argued against (whatever the subject was) until he had himself all tied up in knots. In striking contrast to him was a comrade whom I met in what has proved to be the beginning of a long and, I believe, fruitful association—R. P. Dutt. He made a deep impression on me with his theoretical clarity and his intense revolutionary earnestness.

I had no hesitation in proposing R. P. Dutt as Chairman of the small commission. Again there was opposition but a big majority of the Central Committee supported this proposal. Harry Pollitt and Harry Inkpin (the brother of Albert) were appointed as the other members and the Commission immediately got down to its work.

Up to this time Harry Pollitt, one of the most loyal and devoted of our young Socialist propagandists, had had no experience in the leadership of a political party. But he was to get plenty of it from that time on. For with appointment of the Commission the burden of sustaining and directing the party gradually passed over to these comrades.

By the time the Commission submitted its first report, the dangerous and unstable elements had almost all been got out of the party. We were thus in a position, true with a very small membership and in the face of a whole host of difficulties created by those who from the outside were beginning to attack the party with all kinds of venomous slanders, to re-start the building of the party on the lines of policy more in keeping with the tasks it has to accomplish.

With the second final report of the Commission the party may be said to have found its feet. By that time Dutt and Pollitt were firmly established in the leadership and although there were many hard battles still to be fought and many almost insuperable obstacles to be overcome the party has kept moving forward, however slowly, ever since.

But, however far down the party might have been at any time, there were always loyal comrades all over the country, as there were in the Central Committee, whose abiding faith in the workers and in the party of the workers, kept the party alive when the political adventurers were doing their best to frustrate and strangle it.

They are gone now, the Mellors, the Postgates and the Wilkinsons. They can fatten at the trough of the Imperialists, they can lick the pants of their masters for the dirty sops that may be thrown to them—but our party, conceived with such labour, striving and struggling against foes without and even worse foes within, has battled its way to lusty manhood and now stands forth the recognised leader of the fight against the Imperialists—proudly conscious of the task that lies before it—with the theoretical knowledge and the practical experience that will enable it to carry through to the end.

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Twice Two are a Tallow Candle

BY R. PAGE ARNOT

WHAT HAS BEEN the International situation from 1920–1940? To this question, or to any of this kind, answers year by year have been forthcoming, varying accordingly to class outlook. Since last September these answers have mostly been revised—sometimes every few weeks. The history of France in the last five years, as it can be read in some British periodicals, turns out now to have been entirely different from what these same periodicals were telling to their readers a short couple of months back (and all carried off with such an air that it seems as if the historical facts themselves must have shifted their ground); and in one or two cases the occasion has been taken to revile British Communists, apparently for not having shared the roseate illusions about the French ruling class. This is true for the whole period and for countries other than France: the Communists have not shared the illusions, which the capitalists and the Labour leaders have cherished. For the first thing to notice about the period 1920–40 is that the Communist Parties have known throughout what the international situation was, have analysed in detail that situation as it kept changing and have consequently again and again been able to give a correct lead to the working class; while the others have neither understood the situation as a whole nor observed its changes and have consequently misled and deceived the working class. The Communist Party might make mistakes either in its estimate of a moment in the situation or in the tactics it recommended to the working class. Yet, as Lenin said at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International in 1933:

> When the Bolsheviks do silly things, it is like saying "twice two are five"; but when their enemies, i.e. the capitalists and the heroes of the Second International, do silly things, it is like saying "therefore twice two are a tallow candle". It is not difficult to prove this. Let us take as an example the agreement concluded by America, Great Britain and France and Japan with Kolchak. I ask you, are there any more enlightened and more powerful states in the world than these? But what was the upshot of this? They promised to help Kolchak without calculating, without reflecting and without observation. It proved to be such a fiasco that, in my opinion, it is difficult for the human mind to grasp.

The Communist Party, on the basis of the teachings of Marx and Lenin grasped that Capitalism had reached its last stage in Imperialism; that the war of 1914–18 had been an Imperialist war for the redivision of the world arising out of the rivalry of the monopoly-capitalist groups in the hunt for markets, spheres of influence and raw materials; and that, so long as the handful of big Imperialist powers remained, the same causes would lead towards a Second Imperialist War. They knew that Imperialism, with all the material conditions ripe for a new society, was in fact the threshold of

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Socialism, of world Socialist revolution; and that it was for the working class, rallying round it the mass of the people oppressed by monopoly capitalism, and led by its own revolutionary party, to end capitalism and build a socialist society. What the Russian workers and peasants had done in pulling down the capitalist class and setting up the dictatorship of the proletariat was still to be done by other workers; and with capitalism shaken to its base by the war of 1914–18, there was no question but that 1920–40 would be an epoch of wars and revolutions. This was the outlook of the Communist Party upon the general character of the period.

Revolutions and revolutionary actions arose from the acute crisis of capitalism and the victorious Russian Revolution in a series of countries in Europe and in the colonial lands of Asia and Africa from 1918 onwards. 1921 was an apex, culminating in the victory of the U.S.S.R. against foreign intervention and internal counter-revolutions and in the consolidation of the Communist International; but for the working class of Western Europe it ended in a series of defeats (the last was the defeat of the German proletariat in 1923) and the beginning of a general capitalist offensive.

During these first years the millionaire monopolists in every country knew that the position was extremely serious for capitalism and acted accordingly; but there was little sign that they realised how deep the trouble was within their system. Some hugged the illusion that the nineteenth century was still continuing and that these "catastrophes" and "calamities" were acts of God. For example, in London, Paris and Washington the ruling class cherished the illusion year after year that the Soviet Government was going to fall "in a couple of weeks". The wish was father to the thought in the first years; but the continuance of it up to 1933 when, it is said, Sir John Simon's embargo upon Anglo-Soviet trade was partly due to "certain information" that the Soviet Government was within a few weeks of collapse is fantastic. When the war took place in Finland six months ago, shares in vanished capitalist properties, once held in Russia, were actually sold in Paris at a handsome profit; the Chamberlain Cabinet's actions frequently mirrored on the political field the activity of these share-pushers in Paris. Another illusion spread was that after the war of 1914–18 the "world would go back to normal" (President Harding's "Back to normalcy" and the "Tranquillity" slogan of Mr. Bonar Law) or alternatively, if things did not return to normal immediately, then it was because a big war always has a disturbing effect for quite a number of years afterwards (witness the aftermath of the "Napoleonic Wars") and so it might take just a little longer. Thus capitalist politicians with either a false view of history or none administered their soothing syrup, while they ladled out declarations that there would never be another war.

But they were outdone by leaders of Labour and Socialist parties who had come together in "the carcass of the Second International"; they promised the workers lasting international peace and an epoch of prosperity under Capitalism out of which Socialism would presently develop. At the Hague all-in conference on peace called in 1922 by the International Federation of Trade Unions with Mr. J. H. Thomas in the chair, the proposals of the Soviet Trade Unions (based on Lenin's famous "Remarks on the Tasks of the Hague Delegation") were not discussed by the Conference, which adopted a "general strike against war" resolution—the precise device which Lenin had predicted would be used by Reformists to hoodwink the masses. In

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their "prosperity" propaganda in some countries they urged the workers "to produce more", while in others where they held governmental posts they took more drastic means (leaden bullets) to "calm" the workers.

The temporary defeat of the Workers' Revolution and revolts in Western Europe and the setback to the colonial struggles was the signal from 1923 onwards of an attempt to restore capitalism and of an expansion of the capitalist offensive; and in more than one country of Europe, including Britain, Left-Wing or Labour governments were appointed and through their agency the millionaire monopolists carried out their plans. But this could not last. The increase of productive forces, with the shrinkage of markets, with the world divided into capitalist and socialist sectors was bound to bring about an economic crisis and to give rise to new imperialist wars. *The crisis came in* 1929, *the deepest, longest, widest in the record of capitalism; and the ruling class sought a way out of it in an armaments race and in preparation for a new world war and attack on the U.S.S.R.*

With this background let us list some features of the International Situation in that first decade.

The Peace of Versailles, which the Labour Party voted for unanimously, was exposed by the Communist Party as containing the seeds of future conflict and wars. "Can they," asked Lenin in 1922, "find a way out of this chaos and senselessness?" The capitalists, helped by the Reformists, tried to find a way, and apart from the Hague fiasco mentioned above, the most complete attempt was—

The Dawes Plan—the scheme of Anglo-American finance-capital to squeeze the last ounce out of the German workers—the Communist Party predicted that it would soon break down because of the acute contradictions of capitalism and that meantime it would hit the British working class as well as the German. Within a few months the truth of the latter was shown (Dawes Reparations Coal threw British miners out of work) and the breakdown took place within four years. The Labour Government was chosen as their agent by the Anglo-American millionaire monopolists.

The Young Plan of 1929—Last of the Reparations litter of the sow of Versailles; served by Philip Snowden, "Labour's Chancellor", who was fêted by the sow's owners (the bondholders) but saw his golden swine die on him within two years. Illusions, chivalry for the bondholders, contempt and chicanery for the working class—all this was clearly pointed out by the Communist Party while the Labour Party were being proud of "Labour's Chancellor". Only in the last seven years of Hitler has the Labour Party turned against the unclean meat of Versailles; and since the war began they have once again shown some hankering after "the principles of the Versailles Treaty".

The First Socialist State, attacked by the capitalists who tried to crush it by arms and then by other means, was defended from the beginning and throughout by the Communist Party against intervention by British or other imperialists. The Labour Party, once having served its time as His Majesty's Government, following "continuity of foreign policy", passed from coldness to hatred expressed by both its newspapers and many of its "left" intellectuals.

India—Its movement for liberation was supported throughout by the Communist Party while the Labour Government was responsible for keeping

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the leaders of the Indian Trade Union Movement imprisoned in Meerut gaol, for the suppression of the Indian movement of 1930-31, and for the imprisonment of up to 100,000 political opponents.

Colonial Question as a Whole—The Communist Party has fought for twenty years for breaking the working class away from imperialist interests because "a nation that enslaves others cannot itself be free", while the Labour Party and the Social-Democrats of Germany moved to the oldest Fabian standpoint of backing the colonial policy of the Imperialist powers, because they were economically more "advanced".

World Economic Crisis of 1929–33—was predicted by the Communist Party and on its arrival analysed (in December 1929) as something that "heralds the onset of a fiercer capitalist offensive against the working class and still further accentuates the war danger". But the Social Democratic and Labour Parties of all countries through their most prominent writers (Henry Ford was held by Brailsford to have disproved Marx) accepted and spread through the working class the propaganda of the big capitalists that the boom of 1927–29 would go on for ever into permanent prosperity, without sharp crisis or internal conflict.

The list could be lengthened by almost every event, factor or movement of international significance like the Chinese Revolution or the Anglo-American antagonism; and each time it would be found that the predictions of the Communist Party were verified and their policy justified by what has happened since. On Locarno, the Anglo-German Naval Treaty, "non-intervention" in Spain, Munich, etc., etc.—on each crucial point the Communist Party gave a correct lead while the Labour Party accepted each as a step to peace.

War Danger.—But from 1935 onwards the Communist Party was fighting as never before to prevent a second imperialist war. The Disarmament Conference had broken down, the armaments race was being run, the National Government was favouring and fostering the Nazis (as by the 1935 Naval Treaty) in the hope of making them the shock troops of a capitalist attack on the U.S.S.R., the ruling class of the capitalist countries was launched on war preparations as a way out of the economic crisis. The Labour leaders were backing Sir Samuel Hoare's glaringly obvious confidence trick at Geneva three months before the infamous Hoare-Laval Pact was signed. They were backing a year later the Government's patent support of Franco and the German-Italian invasion of Spain under the horrible farce of "non-intervention". With each abandonment of socialism by the leaders of the Second International, with each successive refusal to work with the anti-war force of the Communist International, with each approval of the policy of the National Government of Blum, etc., etc., the coming war leapt menacingly nearer.

The Communist Party, born out of the struggles of the workers against the first Imperialist war of 1914, strained every nerve, put every effort into the prevention of war.

Bombs on Madrid, they said, will mean bombs on London, if "non-intervention" goes on. Was it correct?

The appeasement policy, they said, if carried on means the certainty of war. Was it correct?

The Communists did everything that man could do from 1935 on to

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prevent the war. They were willing to work with almost everybody, willing to have not only a United Front of the working class to save mankind from the blood-bath, but a People's Front of all those oppressed by monopoly capitalism; and not only that but they were willing to take part in a still wider Peace Front even if it contained not very reliable elements that could at best be only temporary allies of the working class. The first Imperialist war which was within an ace of breaking out in 1911 was postponed (unfortunately without any advantage being taken by the Labour movement of the respite) for three whole years. Now another generation had grown up under a capitalism which would have been overthrown if the Labour leadership had not betrayed socialism in 1914 and now for this second generation a second Imperialist war was in preparation.

It was 1935: Was it possible to prevent the imperialist war from breaking out?

It was 1937: Was it possible to prevent the imperialist war, raging in the Far East, from spreading to the West? Was there a chance to postpone it, to delay it to gain time, *time for the working class to mobilise*, to gather round it the masses, the colonial peoples, all enemies of war, all friends of peace? Therein lay the only hope. The Communist Party strove to make that hope a reality, to carry out the policy of socialism in the struggle against war, to prepare and organise the working class for ending war by ending capitalism.

The Communist Party had carried out its duty to the full up to the outbreak of war. It knows its duty in each stage of development from now on and it will carry its duty out. For nothing else was the Communist Party built. Nothing else is worth the name of socialism.

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The Communists and the Labour Movement

BY H. A. GEORGE

ONLY LAST MONTH there appeared a new and enlarged edition of that orthodox textbook, Max Beer's *History of British Socialism*. In his last two pages the venerable scholar assures us that "the conclusion is inescapable and the argument irrefutable that there is no hope for a Communist Party in Britain". This assertion he based on the 1931 General Election results, which hardly seems conclusive evidence. But time has marched on even since these final words were penned (in the autumn of 1939). For Mr. Beer tells us that from the experience of the two Labour Governments the Labour Party drew the lessons, first, "to refuse any united front or popular front," second, "to refuse any invitation to join or to form a Coalition Government, but to remain strictly a Labour Party, based on a Socialist programme of a gradual reconstruction of society through democratic methods," third, "to concentrate all its efforts on gaining a solid majority at the next General Election." And "as to its policy during the war", "the Parliamentary Labour Party is to act as a responsible and constructively-minded Opposition . . . while preserving complete independence and preparing for the day when it will itself be called upon to form a Government." Those words appear in July, 1940 . . . so perhaps the "irrefutable" disposal of the Communist Party is not quite right either.

I am not attaching any particular importance to Max Beer; but that sort of sapient remark has long been common form (indeed, I might just as well have quoted Sir Walter Citrine's pontificatings at the Plymouth T.U.C. in 1936). It is most instructive when stood on its head. The conclusion is inescapable from the past twenty years' experience (it should read) that without a powerful Communist Party there is no hope for the British working class. Nor is that a matter of dogmatic assertion. It is—so far as this present article is concerned—a matter of history; and I propose here briefly to outline the evidence.

One important warning. Many interested persons have the habit of pooh-poohing Communist argumentation of this sort by pretending that it is "unreal" to present the working class as a solid revolutionary mass only held back from following the Communist vanguard to Soviet power and Socialism by the treachery and chicane of crapulous Labour leaders. No Communist ever presented things that way, ladies and gentlemen. The issue is one of *policy*, of *line*. Which policy, which line has been right during the twenty years that have passed since the foundation of the Communist Party of Great Britain—the line of Lenin or the line of Ramsay MacDonald and his heirs, administrators and assigns in the Transport House oligarchy?

I draw the special attention of the reader to that last sentence. For Lenin was deeply interested in Britain and the British movement, and it was in specific relation to the problems and policy of British Communists that he

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answered in advance the stock anti-Communist argument-in-chief of MacDonald and heirs as aforesaid:—

> The problem here, as everywhere (Lenin wrote), consists in the ability to apply the general and fundamental principles of Communism to the specific relations between classes and parties, to the specific conditions in the objective development towards Communism—conditions which are peculiar to every separate country, and which one must be able to study, understand and point out. . . . Unity of international tactics in the Communist workers' movement everywhere demands, not the elimination of variety, not the abolition of the national peculiarities (this at the present moment is a foolish dream), but such an application of the fundamental principles of Communism—Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat—as will admit of the right modification of these principles in their adaptation and application to national differences.

Those words were written in 1920 by the founder of the Communist International, in one of his major works (*Left-Wing Communism*). They have always been a guiding principle for the International and its constituent parties, the British included. How ridiculous and disingenuous they make the ever-flogged "Moscow domination" claim look! Yet in 1920 MacDonald told the Labour Party Conference that the Communist International "proposed to apply Russian conditions to international policy". It was a lie. And in 1936 the National Council of Labour, in its lengthy statement *The British Labour Movement and Communism*, declaimed against what it called "the Communist International's continuous efforts to substitute revolutionary as against democratic authority, regardless of varying national traditions and circumstances". It was the same lie—only now definitely vintage, after maturing for sixteen years.

It will be noted as significant that the "arguments" used by both MacDonald and Transport House against the Communist Party are identical; nor was it an accident that MacDonald won his way to leadership of the Labour Party after the last war in virtue, as his biographer has explained, of his leadership of the fight against the Communists. The Communists, cried MacDonald in 1922 in words that have so often been echoed by his successors, were approaching the Labour Party only in order to stab it in the back. Odd: but when the Labour Party *was* stabbed in the back, in 1931, it was not by the Communists; the man behind the knife was none other than the Right Honourable James Ramsay MacDonald.

Looking back over the past twenty years, and borrowing our terms from the field of foreign policy, we may say that the line of the dominant Labour leaders in the class conflict has always been one of appeasement, the line of the Communist Party always one of collective security to resist aggression and guarantee progress. In other words, the Communists have stood always for the independence of the working-class movement, for unity and a forward-looking, fighting policy. The orthodox leadership has always stood for subservience to the ruling class, for disunity and for a policy of accommodation to capitalism; they have had no faith in the working class but, on the contrary, a superstitious and servile awe of the omnipotence of the ruling class. The Communists have always put their faith in the working class and have stood in sort of awe of the ruling class, estimating their strength and weakness as accurately as the power of Marxist analysis made possible.

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"The entire course of historical development favours the cause of the working class. . . . There is but one thing that the working class of the capitalist countries still lacks—unity in its own ranks," said Dimitrov at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in 1935. From the beginning the British Communists sought to live up to that key principle. Not that they ever believed in the unprincipled blanket "unity" (i.e. absence of criticism, especially of the leaders) peddled by the official leaders as a substitute for the genuine product; such a "unity" only covers up weakness and potential treachery, and leads a somnolent movement into the slough of defeat. Consider MacDonald's leadership and its end in 1931. No; a "unity" of yes-men is no unity. And a fighting unity presupposes the maintenance of criticism to reveal weaknesses and hammer out policies that will bring victory. As the Communist Party put it in 1920, making its first application for affiliation to the Labour Party, the Party intended "to conform to the Constitution of the Labour Party, without prejudice to its right of criticism on policy or tactics in common with all affiliated bodies". The claim was then, and since, rejected; and we have seen how the refusal of unity has brought disruption in its train, disaffiliations and expulsions now being operated not on any constitutional grounds even, but simply for refusing to toe the line drawn by the small clique who direct the Labour Party machine (e.g. the Pritt case and the action taken over the North Hammersmith "Clear out the Munichеers" conference).

The Communist Party is not, and never has been, just a collection of militants with views about unity and a punch in putting those views. It is not some sort of ginger group. It is a *Party*, and a Party of a new sort, a disciplined organisation, representing the permanent interests of the movement. If there were no Communist Party, said Harry Pollitt, reporting to the Party Congress in 1937:—

> there would be no Party to relate the struggle of the workers' immediate demands to their final aim—the winning of working-class power. There would be no Party basing itself on Marxism to analyse every event and change in the situation, and from this advance the corresponding policy to meet it. There would be no Party to point out the dangers of false policy and leadership. There would be no Party to fight single-mindedly for unity of action by the working class, so that it may grow strong in its struggle against the ruling class, so that while defending to-day its immediate interests against the employers and the National Government, against Fascism and war, the working class may be in a position to-morrow to create the necessary conditions for its final victory.

We may recall one or two examples of the Party's proved capacity to look ahead and give a line. Thus in 1921, when the experiences of the war and post-war revolutionary years had brought a realisation of the need for a united direction of the movement, the Communist Party pointed out that the current talk about a General Staff of Labour might amount to no more than "a new alliance of old leaders, who have already shown how incapable they are of really leading the workers against the Bastilles of capitalism. They will leave the old sectionalism of Labour intact, and this means the same old chaos and confusion hidden under a new and high-sounding name." Who can doubt that all that the General Staff talk in fact amounted to, namely the establishment of the General Council of the T.U.C. in place of

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the old Parliamentary Committee, justified that warning, as 1926 was so soon to show. Nor can it be denied that the further Communist proposal for the transformation of the T.U.C. into a real Congress of Labour would have meant much for the future development of the movement; it was urged that the Congress should be based, not on the unions alone, but on a whole system of shop and works committees grouped around the local Trades Councils which, thus reinforced, could act as the effective local agencies of a genuine General Staff.

Take now the movement's peak point, the General Strike and its prelude of Red Friday. After that preliminary success of July, 1925, the Communist Party took the lead in urging preparedness for the greater struggle that must lie ahead. Characterising the position as "an unstable truce, which cannot lead to industrial peace but only to renewed class conflict", the Party's organ (the *Workers' Weekly*) editorially warned that "the capitalist class will prepare for a crushing attack upon the workers", stressing that if the workers "do not make effective counter-preparations then they are doomed to shattering defeat". Which all duly worked out in May, 1926, for the enormously elaborate preparations of the Government were met on the part of the Labour leaders by what the most respectable historian of the General Strike, Professor Wilfrid H. Crook, has called a "studied attitude of unpreparedness" that "had results upon the Labour forces in the actual struggle that were nothing short of disastrous". Yet during the nine months from July to May the spirit of the movement had never been keener or more aggressive, as the Scarborough T.U.C. clearly showed. Would it not have responded enthusiastically to a programme of action such as that proposed by the Communist Party in January, 1926—summoning a conference of Union Executives to give full powers to the General Council; agreement with the Co-operatives; formation of factory committees on the lines of the Scarborough T.U.C. resolution; organising workers' defence corps and putting the workers' case before the armed forces; formulation of a common wages and hours programme?

Advance ten years. Who was proved correct in 1935—the Communist Party, which had been in the forefront of the great united movement that had sensationally got the Government on the run over Part II of the Unemployment Act, or the Labour leaders, who utterly failed to develop that united advance in order to win victory in the General Election of that year? Who was then right—the Communists who exposed the fraudulent nature of the rearmament programme and warned against the extending line of "appeasement" of Fascism, or the Labour leaders who could only complain, in Mr. Attlee's words, that "the Government used our declaration [of readiness to support its foreign policy] in order to win the General Election. Then they betrayed us"? And in the succeeding two years was it not the Communist Party which played the leading part in initiating the greatest of all the Hunger Marches, in seeking to rally and clarify the mind of the movement after the confusing and disastrous Edinburgh Labour Party conference, in fighting against the crime of "non-intervention" in Spain and in saving the honour of the movement by organising the British Battalion of the International Brigade? Was it not also the Communist Party which consistently stood firmest against the trends to Fascism in this country and which was the vanguard in the battles against Mosley, pulling out 150,000 to Hyde Park

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on September 9th, 1934, and rousing the East End at the barricades in Cable Street on October 4th, 1936?

I am not trying to score easy points or adopt a Simon Pure attitude. It is, I repeat, a question of a policy, a line; and on that count the Communist Party has been proved right in all the major issues which have confronted the working-class movement. This brings us close to the supreme issue of the war and our present struggle. And in this place I only want to make one reference—to Munich and its meaning. That was the critical turning point, and the leadership of the Labour movement was silent until Mr Attlee wished Chamberlain "God-speed" on his fatal journey. Yet ten days before, in the middle of September, 1938, the Communist Party was holding its Fifteenth Congress, and in the key report on the war crisis by R. Palme Dutt these passages were outstanding:—

> The Government . . . is using the war crisis to stage a deception in order to build up the strength of Chamberlain in Britain. They are spreading everywhere a picture that the issue of war is the issue, that to-morrow we may find Britain, France and the Soviet Union at war with Germany. . . . Why is the Government concerned to spread this? Is it because they intend to make such a united stand? That is the last thing they mean to do if they can help it. It is the last thing Hitler wants to put himself up against. If there were such a united stand that would mean not war but peace. But their aim is on this basis to smash the idea of the peace front by associating it in the minds of the people with war. Their aim is on this basis to put across their policy of breaking the peace front, betraying Czechoslovakia, betraying peace and to put it across in such a way that it is received as a triumph for peace, that Chamberlain is the saviour of the peace. . . . If Chamberlain wins, if he succeeds in breaking the peace policy by putting forward his policy for the triumph of peace, then when the bells of peace are ringing over his victory, the real menace begins. . . . If Chamberlain's policy, which will be celebrated as a policy of peace, goes through, then Fascism, enormously strengthened in Europe, will at last be able to turn its forces upon the democracies, and the British people will then have to fight all the same, but under immeasurably worse conditions.

On this twentieth anniversary of the Communist Party in Britain the deadly accuracy of that analysis and warning comes home to all. In contrast we have the Labour leaders now functioning as the fuglemen of the Municheers in the present Coalition Government, leading the fight against the flooding popular demand that Chamberlain and his clique must go. I know no justification more startling, as it could not be more grimly topical, of the whole argument of this article.

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What the Communist Party has meant to me

1. BY COUNCILLOR JACK DAVIES

(Miners' Agent, Rhondda Valley, Foundation Member of the Communist Party)

IN STATING what the Party has meant to me it would be best to begin with the positions I hold and have held in the Working-Class Movement. This indicates more clearly than anything else that it was as a member of the Party I developed from a humble rank and filer to a position of prominence and influence in the Movement. This in itself shows how the Party developed what qualities I possess and should be an encouragement to the younger comrades now coming in.

For more than 35 years I have been active as a Trade Unionist and was a foundation member of the S.W.M.F. Since 1911 I have been a member of the Llwynypia Lodge Committee and the Chairman from 1915 until elected Agent. In these early days I joined the unofficial Reform Movement. 1910 found me joining the I.L.P. at Tonypandy. During the Great War the limitations of the I.L.P. led me to join the British Socialist Party. This was the stepping stone to the greatest step of all in my political life, for in 1920 I joined the Communist Party at its inception. From this time on I was thrown ever more prominently into the battles of the workers and felt very proud indeed when I was elected a member of the Rhondda Urban District Council in 1935. The following year saw my election to the Executive Council of the S.W.M.F. and in 1938 the miners elected me Miners' Agent in the Rhondda area with the biggest majority ever recorded. These positions, Council, E.C. and Agent, were won as a member of the Party and on the full Party programme. Party loyalty, support and leadership have made me what I am to-day. This Party loyalty and respect I treasure as my life.

Previous movements, now defunct or largely so, I found to be revolutionary in expression but fundamentally lacking in a realisation of the character of the problem facing the working class. Such movements are basically reformist although calling themselves revolutionary. The Unofficial Reform Movement is a case in point. Once certain immediate objectives were achieved, such as the eight-hour day, the minimum wage, and 15 per cent increase in 1915, the movement went out of existence. It was a case of living for immediate objectives. What negates the Reformist view is that terrific battles have to be fought for limited objectives such as the historic Cambrian Strike for the Minimum Wage in 1910-11. One may well ask: what sort of battle must be waged for working-class power and Socialism?

The I.L.P. in the Rhondda did not really survive the Great War; it was overwhelmed by war fever and had no real understanding of the character of the war. Turning to the British Socialist Party, its weakness was that it

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was divorced from the Trade Union Movement and tended to be a debating society more than anything else. There was a need for a Party that linked closely the struggle of the workers in trade union, municipal and parliamentary fields. This opportunity arrived in 1920 with the founding of the C.P.

I have seen the Party in the Rhondda grow from six members in 1920 to a position to-day where we have 5 seats on the District Council, 2 out of 3 seats on the E.C. of the S.W.M.F., and 1 of the 2 Miners' Agencies. The rapid growth of the Party came with the failure of the political and industrial movement to defend the miners' wage conditions in 1921. There was a driving out of the right wing and the creation of a movement to the left. During this time the late A. J. Cook became Miners' Agent and later Secretary of the M.F.G.B.

By 1925 the Party had won tremendous influence as a result of work done in the pits and organising marches to Pontypridd to get boot, clothing and rent allowances for the unemployed. It was no accident that in the Miners' eight-months-long fight in 1926, South Wales was the strongest district; the Party was stronger there than elsewhere. There ensued a tough period after 1926 with wholesale victimisation in the pits. This was followed by victimisation of communists and militants in the Federation by reactionary officials. As a consequence the Federation became weaker than at any previous time.

Recovery began in 1932 and the election of Arthur Horner as Miners' Agent in the Gwendraeth Valley became a turning point. This election in the teeth of reactionary opposition dealt a death blow to the policy of expulsions, and with an increasing number of communists being elected to official positions the Federation recovered its strength. Under this militant leadership the Company Union was rooted out from the coalfield; the fights at Bedwas, Taff-Merthyr and Nine Mile Point having a treasured nook of their own in the history of the miners.

The unemployed had their battles too! Who can forget the marches to London? Then, the mass movement of January, 1935, which forced the Government to suspend the operations of an Act of Parliament for the first time. This mighty movement started from the Cambrian Combine Committee of which I was Chairman, and having set the Rhondda ablaze, it soon became a vast People's Movement.

I remember very well the General Election of 1931, when standing for the first time I polled about 5,000 votes for the Party. The Party influence continued to grow and under its leadership the struggle of the workers broadened out, linking together the fight in the pits, in the Council Chamber and Parliament.

Despite setbacks caused by mass migration and loss of membership, the departure of leading comrades for other areas, the Party still retains the dominant influence won in two decades of struggle.

Looking back one sees how fortunate the workers are to-day compared with 40 years ago. Then we were groping towards such a Party as we have to-day.

To-day, workers are asking what the Party says: they see we have been right in our conception of struggle and leadership. We have to-day a Party able to lead the fight in all its aspects towards our goal of Socialism; the ending of Imperialist War by the establishment of Socialism.

Not the least of the positions I hold is the chairmanship of the Rhondda

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Sub-District of the Party. The Rhondda has provided the Party in other areas with leading comrades such as Arthur Horner, Will Paynter, Jack Jones and Glyn Jones and others; but the work goes on and I see new comrades developing in the leadership. I shall slog with them as with the others.

Let the younger and new members take courage from the part played by the Party in the Rhondda and South Wales especially. Despite present setbacks, in 20 years the Party has won a dominant influence politically and industrially. Let the younger members take over the tasks, and, learning from our failures and successes, fight even better than we of the old guard have done.

2. BY HELEN CRAWFURD

(Foundation Member of the Communist Party; previously Vice-President of the Scottish Divisional Council of the Independent Labour Party, and organiser of the Women's Peace Crusade 1914–18*; has played a leading role in the Workers' International Relief)*

ONE CANNOT WRITE of what the British Communist Party has meant to them during the last twenty years without acknowledging the debt we owe to the brilliant leadership of the Communist International—and to the mighty working class of Russia, who, under Lenin and Stalin, carried through the victorious revolution, defeated world counter-revolution, raised the glorious Red Army, which to-day stands brave, strong and proud, defending the citadel of World Communism and Peace, an inspiration to the workers of the entire world.

That *workers* accomplished this great social change made a tremendous impression on the world's working class. From the position of kneeling suppliants begging for crumbs from the rich man's table, they rose to their feet, faith in themselves and their class re-born.

The repercussions of the Russian Revolution were felt, not only in Europe, but by the exploited colonial peoples and gave them a new hope. In ever increasing numbers the workers began to critically examine and analyse the rapidly changing political events.

The insularity of the British Workers had been penetrated, and the international character of the workers struggle more clearly seen. The British Workers were ready for a wider field of action than that provided by Official Labour. The alignment of the British Labour Party with Capitalism during the war of 1914 to 1918—its fear of co-operation with Workers' Russia—together with the fact that leading Labour men were actively participating in every Capitalist scheme of reorganisation and reconstruction had discredited them in the eyes of the intelligent worker.

The newly-formed Communist Party attracted to it these disillusioned workers from the various Parties, who, tired of the negative abstract criticism of the Labour Party and the Pacifism of the I.L.P., looked to the Party for guidance and help. It naturally followed that many of these carried with them outworn traditions and confused ideas into the movement they now entered. This led to many mistakes being made.

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When the Party was formed I was convinced that my place was inside the Party; this conviction was strengthened by developing world conditions, and by a visit in 1920 to Russia and an interview with Lenin. International organisation was becoming increasingly essential in the struggles of the working class in all countries arising from mass unemployment and the competition of the underpaid colonial workers.

In contrasting the Communist leaders with the leaders of Social Democracy in Britain and Germany, one felt that the Russian leaders had faith in the working class, understood the power and might of that class to transform the world, while Social Democracy viewed the working class from a benevolent, bourgeois point of view, feared the workers, and instead of encouraging them to have faith in themselves, discouraged independent thought and action.

The newly-born British Communist Party was almost strangled at birth by the controlled Press, Pulpit and Educational machinery of the Capitalist Class, assisted by the reactionary Leader of the Official Trade Union and Labour Movement. While every attempt to establish International Trade Union Unity was wrecked and sabotaged by the Union Officials, our "thin red line" within the Unions tenaciously held on, refusing to accept defeat. No Knighthoods were presented to the fighting working class of our Party, many of whom slandered, attacked, persecuted, victimised, could neither get a job nor a roof to cover them during these eventful years. Working women, too, suffered in this persecution and attack.

The barriers erected by the reformists were torn down by the workers who joined us in our campaigns for the unemployed—for safety men in the pit—for feeding the hunger-marchers—for relief for Spain—for the International Brigade—in the fight against Fascism and for peace. Our magnificent fighting *Daily Worker* did tremendous work against great odds. In all these struggles—thanks to the Party lead—working women in a new, intelligent and conscious way participated in the work of the Party. To-day the Party is facing the greatest test of its existence. The women of the Party, with the women still outside, have a great responsibility. To watch six or seven hundred men in the British House of Commons, many of them Fascist in sympathy, whose main interest is self interest (as shown by the composition of the present Government of big business men and financiers) holding the fate and lives of forty-five million human beings in their hands! This would be impossible if the working class of this country—men and women—took their rightful place and demanded that the "Friends of Fascism and the representatives of Big Business must go". This is the immediate task of our Party—to bring the masses of men and women together for the formation of a Government representing all true lovers of humanity and real peace. The working class of the world must be brought together to end this crime of mass slaughter of the people. This is the Party call to-day, in the twentieth year of its existence. Our Party and its policy has been vindicated. To-day we stand resolute. The workers look to us, and are increasingly following our Leadership. We are proud of our Party which will one day lead the Workers of Britain to Victory.

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3. BY MAURICE DOBB

(*Foundation-Secretary, later Chairman, of Cambridge University Labour Club*, 1920-22; *joined I.L.P. in* 1919 *and Communist Party in* 1922; *for many years Executive Committee member of Labour Research Department, and for a short period an editor of* The Plebs *magazine; Lecturer in Economics at Cambridge University and member of the Association of University Teachers; Chairman of the Faculty of Economics at Marx House; author of books on U.S.S.R. and on economic questions*)

MY FIRST CONTACT with Communists and with the newly-formed C.P.G.B. was toward the close of my student days. This was in the years of the first phase of the post-war economic crisis, when there was still a great deal of militant temper in the working-class movement, bent on "changing for good the old conditions" and putting the working class in power as had been done in Russia. But at this time there was still a great deal of confusion of thought and of organisation and tactics in the labour movement: primitive confusion about the political strategy of the struggle for power, about the State, etc.: and on the one hand a number of Left-wing sects devoted mainly to theoretical discussion or to purely general propaganda about Socialism, and on the other hand keen militant workers with influence in mass organisations but still thinking exclusively in terms of the old forms of organisation and time-honoured methods of activity. Although my contacts with the labour movement were still slender—participation via a student labour club in local Labour Party election work, and in London some part in the work of an I.L.P. branch—these were sufficient to make me realise, when I first met the work of the C.P., what an enormous difference there was between the old types of political party and the outlook, organisation and activity of this "party of a new type". This latter was designed to lead the working class *in action*, and this meant taking a leading part, in a disciplined and organised manner, in the everyday struggles of the workers. It became increasingly clear, when one started to think of the struggle against capitalism in a concrete and realistic way, that without the leadership of such a party of this type it would be impossible for the working class to achieve socialism.

There was another thing that struck me forcibly in those days about the C.P.: it was the only body that really had a sense, and gave one a sense, of participating in a world movement, and thinking of world events in realistic and up-to-date terms. True, in the I.L.P. and elsewhere there had been a great deal of "internationalism" preached, and there had been widespread enthusiasm, much of it over-romantic in character, about the Russian Revolution; but this kind of sentiment was in general rather abstract, and when it came down to brass tacks, the real outlook was surprisingly insular. I still have a vivid memory of a student meeting of hardly more than a dozen (some time before the C.P.G.B. was formed) to which the present editor of the LABOUR MONTHLY reported on an international student conference to which he had been a delegate in 1919. The onus of his report, as I remember it, was that the conference had shown how far the British movement was behind the level of the international movement, and behind the urgent needs of the class struggle which was transforming and dominating Europe on an

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international scale. In face of this our whole outlook and activity needed to be reorientated. It was precisely this re-orientation of the whole movement which I later realised that the C.P. was designed and destined to effect. Later still, when I visited U.S.S.R., and studied the history of the Russian Revolution, it became clear to me how unthinkable the whole story would be without the leading role of the party that Lenin had given his life to build. Space does not allow one to explain in detail how leading events in the 'twenties, such as the General Strike and the two Labour Governments, drove home to many of us the lesson that, while it was vitally necessary to revive the initiative and self-activity of existing working-class organisations, militants must abandon the conception of mere "ginger-group" tactics, operating exclusively through the traditional forms of organisation, in favour of an entirely new political leadership to the whole movement; and in emphasising this continually the LABOUR MONTHLY played a very important role.

In the period of the 'twenties, student circles and professional workers (with whom my own work brought me most closely in contact), even when they called themselves Socialists, were in the main separated from the working-class movement and politics. But the economic crisis of 1930, bringing middle-class unemployment and insecurity of tenure in its train, effected a radical change in such circles. Economic questions of a trade union type, social questions concerning their status and function in society, thrust themselves under the nose of students and professional workers for the first time. Later, the rise of Fascism close to their own doorstep and the gathering clouds of the coming war forced such people to think politically, and increasing numbers of them to act politically. The triumph of socialist construction in U.S.S.R., with the success of the Five-Year Plans, and events in France and Spain laid their imprint on such persons in quick succession. Not only did they come to realise, not merely "in their heads" but through the touch of their own experiences, that capitalism was rotten and must go; increasing numbers of them gravitated towards the working-class movement, and a significant number of them towards Communism, because they saw in it the only power capable of revolutionising and reconstructing society.

Only too many of them, of course, retained the individualism, the aloofness, of their previous isolated and privileged position, more especially those who were furthest removed from any kind of "factory" basis to their profession. At the same time many of them, as they acquired concrete political experience, came to see in the C.P. the kind of organisation, combining discussion with discipline and a tradition of political theory with realistic thinking in face of changing situations, that offered the political leadership for which they had been groping, and the practical possibility of leading society out of contemporary chaos. While they came to appreciate that the strength of Communism lay in its roots in the working class, they saw that it held an appeal for the professional and middle class as well. And in the coming weeks and months this appreciation is likely to broaden and deepen; for while many of such people (not alone) have been bewildered, some politically unhinged, by the rush of events since last August, events since May, especially events in France, with their sharply delineated class features, are already stamping their political lesson even on the least politically-minded among them.

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4. BY J. R. SCOTT

THE OCCASION OF celebrating the Twentieth Anniversary of the Communist Party of Great Britain reminds me that it was in the early summer of 1924 when I first became interested in the Party. At that time the Party was conducting a campaign around the question of affiliation to the Labour Party, and in reading regularly the *Workers' Weekly* I was profoundly impressed with the point that this Party meant Unity and Socialism and was organised as a Party to achieve these ambitions.

I joined in August, 1924, and have appreciated every day of my membership. In retrospect, I remember the great "Back to the Unions" campaign of 1924–1925, leading up to the great class stand of Red Friday. This was followed by the campaign of Unity in preparation for the General Strike of 1926. The aftermath of 1926 was a serious time for the Party, because in the confusion that followed that terrible betrayal the General Council of the Trades Union Congress embarked upon the open policy of "Peace in Industry" led by Turner and Mond, notoriously known as Mondism. The Party went out to stem the rot, and did so very effectively, advocating the policy of class struggle versus class collaboration. From there on to 1931, the height of the world economic crisis, again when Trade Union leaders were advocating acceptance of wage cuts and worsened working conditions, the Party headed the movement against passive acceptance of such scandalous proposals. Fascism began to rear its head in Northern Europe and war as the method of solving capitalist crises began to take shape. By meetings and literature the Party clearly pointed out to the masses the inevitable consequences. So on to the present day when the Party stands out unchallenged as the only Party advocating the policy of class struggle against class collaboration.

During all this time I have been playing an active part in the Trade Union Movement. I became a member of the London District Committee of the Amalgamated Engineering Union in the autumn of 1925 and continued a member until I was elected a full-time official of that Union in 1935. I remained an official until December, 1939, when for reasons outside my control, which are well known to most people, I returned to the workshop where I am to this very day.

How glad I am to be a Party member, belonging to a Party where one can meet comrades to discuss the politics of every issue confronting workers, a Party with its clear perspective to guide and direct its every member. Perhaps I appreciated my membership of the Party most when I had the responsibility of a full-time official position, when problems have to be faced and dealt with on the spot. In such times of difficulties I always recalled to myself the elementary principles of the class struggle, and I gained strength from my knowledge that I was a member of a Party international in its outlook and power.

I have difficulty in trying to understand those comrades who do not belong to a Party, for it is certain that a viewpoint cannot be successfully advanced without a Party. Is not this so with the Trade Union Movement, and it is more so with the political struggle of the masses for emancipation. We need

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to organise together, to be conscious of the objective and with organised activity reach the goal of Socialism.

As this has been in the past, it will be more pronouncedly so in the future. Wider numbers of people are realising the essence of the issues of the present war. To organise the struggle there will be an even greater necessity for the Party, to give leadership to the masses. I hope, I know I shall, gain additional strength and courage from my membership of the Party and that we need additional strength and numbers to carry through our colossal tasks.

Labour Monthly Discussion Groups

Discussion Groups are now meeting in the following districts. Will interested readers please get in touch with us and we will give them particulars.

LONDON

Camden Town
Edgware and Mill Hill
Finchley
Hampstead
Hampstead Garden Suburb
St. Pancras
Stamford Hill
Stoke Newington
Walthamstow
Whitechapel

PROVINCES

Birmingham
Blackburn
Bristol
Dublin
Halifax
Kenton, Middlesex
Newcastle-on-Tyne
Oxford
Pinner, Middlesex
Peterborough
Sheffield
Stockton-on-Tees
Sidcup
Waltham Cross, Herts
Warrington
Woodford

The Liverpool Left Book Club continues to devote one meeting monthly to a discussion of LABOUR MONTHLY articles.

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The U.S.S.R. Makes Sure

BY QUÆSTOR

IN THE BITTERNESS of thwarted roguery the British capitalist press has blurted out many eloquent facts about the terrorist Daladier-Reynaud-Pétain régimes in France which successively opened the door wider and wider to Nazi conquest. But one damning confession seems to have escaped general notice—the result of an "Inquest on France" announced in the leading article of the *Economist* on July 13th. Yet it has its special importance. The City's mouthpiece confesses the truth of the charge made again and again in these pages—that the war came when it did because of the anti-Soviet intrigues of the French and British bourgeoisie.

See how the irrefutable case is built up. In consequence of the Popular Front victory at the 1936 elections, "the French Right forgot their patriotism in their fear of social revolution." Then came the war in Spain, with the Soviet Union's support of the Republic (the Fascist Powers' organisation and support of Franco's rebellion is not mentioned); this caused "bitter ideological distaste for the Russian Pact". The Axis made use of this state of mind: "the French Right were encouraged to believe that Hitler wanted nothing but peace and friendship with France, provided she abandoned the Franco-Soviet policy of 'encirclement' and allowed Germany to fulfil her anti-Bolshevist mission in Eastern Europe." But it was not only the "Right". In 1937 a purely Radical Government was formed, and "since the Radicals were liquidating Popular Frontism at home, they followed all the more eagerly the relatively anti-Russian appeasement policy put forward by the British Government." The test came with Czechoslovakia: "at Munich the dismemberment of the Czech State was agreed upon without reference to Russia" (just like the closing of the Burma Road, in Tokyo, in July, 1940) "and the 1935 Franco-Soviet Pact actually, if not officially, lapsed. If the status quo could only be defended with the help of Russia, the French Government preferred to see it lapse. M. Bonnet gave Hitler a free hand in Eastern Europe. . . ."

It will be noticed that that modest violet, the Chamberlain Government, sacrcely figures in the picture; you might almost think that it was M. Daladier who took the lead in the negotiations with Hitler. The same anxiety to screen the British Government reappears a little further. "When the invasion of Bohemia opened Mr. Chamberlain's eyes to the real nature of Nazi ambitions, and Great Britain suddenly veered to the Barthou (1934) policy of the Grand Alliance, France had already left it behind". The leading article goes on to explain how the Right organised defeat, with the customary blackguardly slanders about the French Communists fleeing to Germany, doing their propaganda from Berlin, and so forth. The real interest for us lies in the admission that the French bourgeoisie was sabotaging the Moscow negotiations from the outset—and pursuing an old policy thereby. As for Mr. Chamberlain's "policy of the Grand Alliance", we know what form that took—over two months' resistance to the very idea of an Anglo-Franco-Soviet Pact (surrendering Albania and Memel to the Axis in the meantime),

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then another six weeks' opposition to guarantees for the Baltic States (with the secret Hudson-Wohltat negotiations going on meanwhile), and lastly (July-August) the miserable comedy of refusing to admit the possibility of "indirect" German aggression through Hitler's Fifth Columns, or of the Red Army's entry into Poland, should the enormous German forces now openly massing on the Polish border make an attack.

We may safely wait, however, for some French counterpart of the *Economist* to make the necessary revelations about their erstwhile British accomplices. It is sufficient to record that, during all this period of black treachery and double-dealing of the French bourgeoisie, Mr. Chamberlain's Government was their bosom friend and confidant and, consequently, their fellow-conspirator against the U.S.S.R.

The conspiracy came out into the open when, and only when, it was forced out by the refusal of the U.S.S.R. to be hoodwinked any longer, i.e. by its signature of the Pact of Non-Aggression with Germany. To draw up a list of the subsequent overt acts of hostility to the Soviet Union on the part of the British bourgeoisie is a useful prelude to an examination of Soviet policy at present. It is quite impressive.

September 1939. The Soviet Union offers to reopen trade negotiations; the British Government ignores the offer for a whole month—until after the events of October.

October 1939. The British capitalist press, with Government encouragement, carries on a furious anti-Soviet campaign in connection with the negotiations for pacts of mutual assistance between the U.S.S.R. and the Baltic States and Turkey.

November 1939. The same thing happens during Soviet negotiations with Finland.

December 1939. Soviet-Finnish War. British intervention begins more and more openly.

January 1940. General Ironside tells American correspondents at Lady Astor's (January 19th) that between March and May the Allies hope to send several divisions to Finland. British Ambassador withdrawn from Moscow "on leave".

February 1940. The Soviet Union offers to accept British mediation (February 22nd). The British Government refuses. Allies' High Command plans to despatch 150,000 men.

March 1940. Soviet-Finnish peace (March 12th); *after which* an open campaign in the British press (subject to censorship) for air attacks on Baku. U.S.S.R. offers to reopen trade negotiations (March 27th).

April 1940. Soviet ships seized in the Far East, on the pretext that the goods they carry are destined for Germany—denied by the U.S.S.R. British Government replies to Soviet trade offer with demands for details of Soviet-German trade.

May 1940. British Government's "memoranda" continue *after* formation of Churchill Government (in which Lord Halifax remains Foreign Secretary). Finally Cripps is proposed as "special envoy" to Moscow—in the absence of any British Ambassador.

June 1940. Cripps leaves for Moscow as Ambassador, after nearly three weeks' more delay. Soviet ships released; Soviet Government allows the French Government to purchase part of cargo.

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July 1940. Stalin receives Cripps within 3 weeks of his arrival (July 1st). Churchill, Halifax and other Ministers see Maisky. Much talk of "better atmosphere". British Government agrees with Japan to stab China in the back, by closing the Burma Road over which Soviet munitions travel, without informing or consulting the U.S.S.R.

If there is any difference between the policy of the Chamberlain Government and that of his successor, as told by these irrefutable facts, it has been well concealed. The fact is, of course, that the imperialist bourgeoisie of Great Britain remains as before the implacable, vindictive enemy of the Soviet Union, and its enmity has adopted a "peaceful" garb, for the time being, merely because its warlike attempts suffered a humiliating fiasco on the Mannerheim line last March.

Simpletons may ignore this: but the Soviet Union doesn't, and in vain does the fowler spread the net in sight of the bird. Imagine the insolence of the following passage in the *Economist*, which last October applauded to the skies the British Government's successful wrecking of the Soviet-Finnish pact:

> We are fighting Germany. At all costs Germany must be prevented from securing a foothold in the Eastern Mediterranean and from controlling the Near-Eastern oilfields. Neither Russia nor Turkey wishes to see an extension of German influence. A proposal by us that there should be some form of joint guarantee of the Straits, with the backing of the British Navy, and an intimation that a Black Sea Pact of Russia, Bulgaria and Turkey would command our interest and, if necessary, active co-operation, might go far to remedy a situation which is already critical and may be disastrous. (July 13th.)

Or of this, in the same *Economist*, which only the previous week had urged (and still apologises for) an Anglo-Japanese "compromise" over the Burma Road, and had taken good care not to mention the U.S.S.R. in connection with it:

> Russia will, for the next three months, be China's principal source of supply. The fate of Chungking may well depend on Stalin's readiness (and ability) to increase supplies. . . . Possibly a threat of joint action against Japan by the three outside Powers might induce a mood of reason. . . . Our utmost diplomatic activity should be exerted in Washington and Moscow to secure whatever measure of co-operation is compatible with the two States' diversion of interest elsewhere. (July 20th.)

Truly, the Devil was sick—the Devil a monk would be. The Soviet Government has shown in recent weeks how well it knows the old tag, and how little it is inclined to trust the fine words of capitalist statesmen, whether they bear a German or an English name. And although, in the nature of things, a revolutionary must devote his principal attention to the fight against the enemy at home, it may be useful to answer at this point questions which have been asked by confused but honest well-wishers to the Soviet Union. Has the Soviet attitude to Fascism changed? No, of course not; during all the months since the Soviet-German Pact of Non-Aggression was signed, there has not been one word of direct or indirect apology in the U.S.S.R. for Fascism or Nazism. Such a question smacks of the same simplicity which led innocents to ask, when the first diplomatic relations between the U.S.S.R. and a capitalist State were established, whether the Soviet attitude to capitalism had changed. When the working people of one great country

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have overthrown their capitalists and landlords, and after an interval of violence and hostile propaganda the other capitalist States temporarily renounce war against them, it is the capitalists who have changed their attitude, not the workers and peasants. Nazism is still the enemy of the U.S.S.R. *inside* Germany: but German Nazism had the wit to see, last August, what British Imperialism failed to understand in March—that the U.S.S.R. is too big a fortress to tackle. It saw, furthermore, that the U.S.S.R. was willing to trade, impartially and as a neutral, with both sides. Hitler took advantage of this, while Halifax and his colleagues didn't. As they had no scruples in trading with other neutrals, like the U.S.A., the presumption must be that their enmity to the U.S.S.R. got the better of them, and therefore was stronger than Hitler's.

Yet how childish is the stratagem to involve the U.S.S.R. on the side of Great Britain, without committing British Imperialism to a renunciation of its anti-Soviet policy, by the simple device of saying: "It will be worse for the U.S.S.R. if we are beaten: better come in now, while there is time!" For years Mr. Chamberlain laid his plans for a double-barrelled attack on the U.S.S.R. by Germany and Japan, with the rest of the world looking on. That was the strategy behind "non-intervention" in Spain, in China, in Austria and Czechoslovakia. Wherein is the Soviet Union worse off, should Hitler turn against it after defeating the Allies? Certainly not as regards Japan, ruinously involved in China; or as regards the internal conditions of the German Empire, an even greater jailer and torturer of nations to-day than Tsardom in the days gone by; or as regards the ability of French and British Imperialism to help the Nazi attacker, as they did in Spain! Whereas one has only to imagine the joy of the old anti-Soviet plotters, screened behind the Churchills and the Attlees—screened but not hampered very much, to judge from the exploits of the liberticide Sir John Anderson at home and of Lord Halifax, friend of aggressors, abroad—if the U.S.S.R. were wantonly to provoke a conflict with Germany or Japan, without any sign of British Imperialism laying aside its traditional enmity to the U.S.S.R.

So the U.S.S.R. continues on its Socialist path—the path likewise of the workers and peasants of all countries—orienting itself neither on Germany nor on the Allies, as Stalin said at the Party Congress in 1934 ("Our orientation in the past and our orientation at the present time is towards the U.S.S.R., and towards the U.S.S.R. alone"), and trusting neither, except in so far as they show by deeds, not words, their abandonment of even a part of their hostility to the first country of Socialism.

We may now briefly survey the main fields of Soviet foreign policy to-day.

The Baltic

In the Baltic States—Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania—great and historic changes have taken place. The diplomatic side is easy to follow. Forced last October into pacts of mutual assistance with the U.S.S.R. by sheer self-defence against German ambitions, the bourgeois Governments of these States proved incapable of resisting the temptation to seek "reinsurance" against the U.S.S.R. Their ruling military or Fascist cliques (for all three of them were ruled by dictatorships) had long placed their secret services at the disposal of German and British espionage, and they did not break off the connection when the pacts were signed. Soviet soldiers in Lithuania were

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kidnapped and tortured with the connivance of the Home Office and the police, to make them betray military secrets. Investigation of these outrages revealed the conclusion of a secret military understanding between the Lithuanian Government of President Smetona and the Governments of President Ulmanis (Latvia) and President Paets (Esthonia). The U.S.S.R. then insisted on the considerable strengthening of its garrisons (to the total of 18 to 20 mechanised divisions, about 400,000 men), and on the formation of governments which could be relied upon to fulfil the pacts. In the melancholy words of the *Daily Telegraph* Helsinki correspondent (July 16th):

The conversion of the Baltic countries into Communist States is entirely due to Hitler's desire to curry favour with the Soviet *and his inability to put up any opposition.*

But it is just at this point that the diplomatic side ceases to be of importance. Readers of the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* cannot fail to have been struck by the active part which the workers and peasants of the nations subjected to Tsardom played in the revolutionary struggles; and the working people of the Baltic States (industrially more advanced, and historically more exposed to Western influence) were no exception. Marxist parties were already in existence in Lithuania and Latvia before the first Russian Social-Democratic Congress in 1898 (p. 21). Riga was one of the great centres of strikes and clashes with the Tsarist troops before the 1905 revolution (p. 59). A stubborn peasants' and workers' rising in Latvia and Esthonia followed the December, 1905, insurrection in Moscow, and was only put down by special punitive expeditions during 1906 and 1907 (pp. 83–34). In 1912, when the revival of the working class movement was marked by the great strikes of protest against the massacre of workers on the Lena Goldfields, the Baltic Provinces were in the forefront (p. 147). Thus it would have been surprising had the Baltic peoples fallen behind the others when the overthrow of Tsardom in 1917 cleared the way for the Socialist Revolution.

And so, in fact, the Soviet of Tallinn (then called Reval) seized power in October, 1917, after the revolution in Petrograd. Factories and the land were nationalised. The Esthonian Soviets were only overthrown on February 25th, 1918, when the German troops occupied the country. On November 30th of the same year, when they withdrew, a Soviet Republic (the "Esthonian Working Commune") was again proclaimed—only to be overthrown, early in 1919, by the British Fleet, which helped the Esthonian Whites (reinforced by 2,000 "volunteers" from Finland) to shoot down the workers and peasants in sufficiently large numbers to proclaim the "Democratic Republic" of Esthonia.

Latvia was nearly all occupied by the Germans before the November Revolution. Directly they left, in December, 1918, Soviets sprang up, and on January 5th, 1919, the Latvian Soviet Republic was proclaimed at Riga. The Whites—Lettish manufacturers and German barons—called in the reactionary German forces, which—with the silent co-operation of the British Navy (a squadron of which lay at Libau under Admiral Sinclair from December, 1918) won a number of successes, and captured Riga on May 22nd. Von der Goltz, the German commander, mentions in his memoirs that the British Admiral had suggested on April 11th that he should attack Riga.

Lithuania was also in German occupation when the November Revolution took place; and it was by kind permission of the German authorities that

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Smetona, the Fascist leader lately driven out, convened a "National Council" which did not include a single worker. This body, on December 11th, 1917, proclaimed the "independence" of Lithuania, accompanying it with a declaration of Lithuania's readiness to enter a military, economic and Customs union with Germany. When the Germans withdrew in November, 1918, Soviets were formed by the peasants and workers, and in February, 1919, a Soviet Republic was proclaimed at Vilna—overthrown by the Poles on April 19th, 1919.

The conclusion from these facts is clear. Twenty years ago the German and British imperialists and their satellites crushed workers' and peasants' power in the Baltic States. The restoration of that power in 1940 is a resounding defeat for the British and German imperialists. They were able to act as they did in 1919 because of the weakness of Soviet Russia; they are forced to give way in 1940 because of its strength. "Ah, but this is due to the armed intervention of the U.S.S.R." shriek the "Labour"-Liberal intellectuals who but recently were preaching the armed carving-up of Europe to suit an Anglo-French "Federal" hegemony. Quite so. What would Socialist internationalism be worth, if it ceased to operate directly the working people of one country came into power? The internationalism of the working people of the U.S.S.R. expresses itself no less in the great subscription for the British miners in 1926 and in the help to the Baltic peoples in 1940 than in the struggle for disarmament in 1928–1933 and in the fight for collective security in 1934–1939.

The Near East

After the foregoing, the Soviet Action in Bessarabia and the Northern Bukovina is easy to understand. Bessarabia too was torn from Soviet Russia when it could not resist. Taking advantage of Russian weakness, the Rumanian ruling aristocracy never fulfilled their solemn pledge of March 5th, 1918, to evacuate the country. Instead, they convened on March 27th a meeting of a packed "National Assembly" from which workers, peasants and national minorities were excluded, and which voted by 86 to 3, with 38 abstentions for annexation to Rumania. After the most unexampled terror, at a final session on November 26th, at which only 46 were present out of 149, 38 members were found to vote for abolition of autonomy. When, in 1924, the Soviet Government proposed a plebiscite in Bessarabia, the Rumanian Government significantly refused. Well they might, since Britain and France had already ratified a protocol "granting" Bessarabia to Rumania. By punitive expeditions, executions, the burning of villages, fiendish torture in the jails, the Rumanian authorities succeeded for twenty years in keeping in subjection that 75 per cent of the Bessarabian population (the working peasantry) who held 25 per cent of the land. To-day, that is all over and done with. The Bessarabian peasants have divided up the estates of that bare fraction of the population who held nearly half the land. Jew, Russian, Rumanian, Moldavian, Bulgar, Ukrainian are now equal in Bessarabia. Both for the Bessarabian and for the Ukrainian population of North Bukovina, a new life has begun.

It may well be that the firm Soviet action was precipitated by the turning of the Rumanian aristocracy, headed by King Carol, towards Germany after the overthrow of France. Certainly it is hardly probable that the

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U.S.S.R. would view impassively the establishment of a base for German imperialism on the Black Sea. We have already seen how willingly British imperialism would take advantage of this Soviet attitude for its own purposes, without renouncing its anti-Soviet ambitions for an instant. But the U.S.S.R. has given unmistakable notice that it will not fall into this trap; and all the *Economist's* soft soap won't wash out the indelible stain of the Allied plans for an attack on the U.S.S.R. through the Black Sea which have lately come to light. The first bold denunciations of the documents on this subject published by the Germans as forgeries have given way to complaints that one of them was "touched up." But in fact no British capitalist paper has dared to publish them, and there are some reasons for thinking that in this case even the famous Nazi masters of the art of forgery have not needed to practise it.

The documents are five in number. One is a telegram dated March 7th, 1940, from General Weygand, in the Near East, to General Gamelin, informing him of his talk with Air Marshal Mitchell, of the R.A.F., who had arrived in connection with plans for air attacks on the Caucasus. The second is a note by Gamelin, dated March 10th, of plans for Franco-British armed intervention in the Finnish war: it speaks, by the way, of 15,000 French and Polish troops, and of 6 or 7 British divisions. In the third, a telegram from Gamelin to Weygand on March 12th, operations against the U.S.S.R. by British forces in the Middle East, and by the Turkish Army in the Caucasus, are discussed. Next comes a telegram from Massigli, the French Ambassador at Ankara, to the French Foreign Office on March 14th. In it he tells of his talk with the Turkish Foreign Minister, Sarajoglu, about Anglo-French plans for bombing Batum and Baku from bases in Syria and Irak. Sarajoglu said this would obviously entail flying over Turkey in one case, and Iran in the other. He did not know the attitude of Iran, but so far as Turkey was concerned, "there would be no difficulty". Lastly, on March 16th, there is a memorandum by Gamelin on new fronts for the purpose of stopping the supply of Swedish iron and Soviet oil to Germany, with further details of the attack on the U.S.S.R. Nine squadrons (four of them French) had been detailed to bomb Baku. The Turkish Army would fight in the Caucasus. "The Soviet-Finnish peace must not change our plans".

Now the remarkable thing is that these documents, described so freely as forgeries by those who refrain from giving the public a chance to judge for themselves, are completely corroborated by contemporary statements in the British press. Thus, we find Mr. V. Gordon Lennox, the extremely well-informed diplomatic correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, writing on March 14th (the very day of the Massigli telegram):

> We must consider what effect the conclusion of peace in Moscow may have on the general war policy of the Allies. For many weeks past the British Government has been of opinion that the relations between Germany and Russia are such as to justify the view that Russia has become the ally of Germany. It does not necessarily follow that the Allies will declare war upon Russia; it is indeed no longer fashionable to declare war. But the Allies may well feel justified at some stage in the campaign in considering that a blow against Russia would be a blow against Germany. . . . For the Allies, as for the Nazi-Bolshevik Powers, the sources of iron supply in Sweden and of oil supply in Transcaucasia are obvious points of vital strategic interest.

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Three days later another writer on the Conservative side, as well-informed of what Mr. Chamberlain's friends were thinking as Mr. Gordon-Lennox is of the mind of the War Office—the late Scrutator—took up the tale in the *Sunday Times:*

The North of Europe is closed to us for the present, but there are prospects that may be as good or better in the south. The master-stroke in the war so far has been the alliance with Turkey. . . It may be that the alliance now may be the turning-point of its strategy. If we assumed that the issue will not be joined on the Western Front, and that the Baltic is to be a closed sea in this war, the obvious alternative is the Black Sea. The most deadly blow that could be inflicted on Germany is to cut off her supplies of oil, and if Russia came into the war that could be done by attacking her. There are two alternative routes to this end. We might make sea transport across the Black Sea impossible and—with the passage of the Dardanelles now, it is to be hoped, assured to us—air bases for raids on the oilfields would not be lacking to us. An alternative route for air raids if necessary would be from Syria, Palestine and Mosul in Northern Irak.

More evidence could be quoted—some was mentioned in these pages a few months ago—but it is hardly necessary. Whatever measures of security the Soviet Union may take in the Near East—whether in the form so obsequiously proposed by the *Economist* on July 13th, or in any other form—there can be no doubt whatsoever that it will be amply justified in acting as though it can trust the Governments of Britain, Germany, Rumania and Turkey no further than it can see them.

The Far East

As though butter would never melt in his mouth, *The Times* diplomatic correspondent on July 18th rolled up his eyes and gently sighed:

Press reports from Moscow suggest that the Soviet Government suspect that the British Government would try and compel the Chinese Government to come to terms with Japan. The suspicion is unfounded, for there has been no change in British policy. Any peace would have to be acceptable to both the Japanese and the Chinese.

The full savour of this perfect example of official hypocrisy will best be felt if it is read in reverse order. "Peace acceptable both to the Japanese and the Chinese"—to the thief and to his victim, to the tiger and to his prey? Yes, absurd enough on the face of it, and spelling an endless continuation of the war; but not so absurd when we recalled another recent case in which the British Government pledged itself to work for peace acceptable to both sides—Spain. We know how it showed its impartiality: by starving the Republicans, by sending the *Devonshire* to overawe Republican Minorca, intriguing with the traitor Casado. And if it could hope for a change in the Chinese camp, to bring about a break-up of its solidarity, a rupture between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party (such as *The Times* was hopefully writing about last November) what rosy prospects of an "anti-Comintern Bloc" in the Far East might not open before Lord Halifax once again?

Luckily China is politically and geographically in a very different situation from Spain. The extension of democracy in the provinces, the calling of the National Constitutional Congress next November, and other measures adopted by agreement between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party spell disappointment for *The Times.*

"There has been no change in British policy". That is hardly likely to

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reassure the Soviet Government, if it needs reassuring. For if that policy has meant anything, it has meant that the British Government has been exerting pressure on China to surrender to Japan ever since the latest phase of Japanese aggression began, in 1937. No other significance can be given to the successive refusals of Chinese appeals for assistance at meetings of the League of Nations; to the grudging grant of British guarantees on £6,000,000 credits for China, if she has the money to spend, as the *sole* official assistance to her over three years; to the systematic legalisation of Japanese acts of violence—the seizure of the Chinese Customs (summer, 1938), the terror of the Japanese police (June, 1939), the disposal of part of the Chinese silver in Tientsin Banks (June, 1940), the closing of the Burma Road (July, 1940): to the provision of Japan with special facilities for procuring oil for her war machine. And the famous speech of the British Ambassador in Tokyo in March of this year must not be forgotten—with its declaration that Britain and Japan are engaged in the same struggle against "outside subversive influences".

The Chinese Ambassador in London said plainly what he understood by disinterested help.

He gratefully acknowledged the substantial contribution which Russia had already made and, he was confident, would continue to make towards China's fight for freedom in Asia. She had given China great material assistance by barter arrangements, without any political conditions whatever. (*The Times*, July 10th.)

It is precisely because of this glaring difference in policies that the closing of the Burma Road is particularly important. So profound is the allegiance of the British Government to its old policy—of helping Japan against China—that even at a critical stage of the war it cast to the winds all its recent professions of friendship with the U.S.S.R. For of what value are such professions, public and private—and we can be sure there was no lack of them, either at Cripps' interview with Stalin on July 1st, or at the Soviet Ambassador's talks with Mr Churchill and Lord Halifax since that date—when, on the first opportunity for a practical demonstration of friendliness by consultations on a point of common interest, the British Government ostentatiously avoided the U.S.S.R.? We may say "ostentatiously", because there was no concealment of the fact that the U.S. Government was at any rate informed at every stage, and thus given a chance to express its opinion; while the Soviet Government was left to learn of what was going on through the press, until after the Anglo-Japanese agreement had been signed. In probably one of the most extraordinary and insulting communiqués ever issued from official sources, it was stated (July 16th) that the British Government had informed "the United States Government and Sir Stafford Cripps". In reality, as the Soviet Government was obliged to point out in a Tass communiqué on July 19th, "the British Government did not solicit either the opinion or the advice of the U.S.S.R. on this matter; that is, it did not consult with the Soviet Government". And yet Mr. Churchill had had the audacity to declare in Parliament the previous day that the Anglo-Japanese agreement had been reached "after full consideration of the attitude of the U.S.S.R."—which his Government had been careful not to ascertain!

If the Soviet Government again reaches for its longest spoon in supping with the Devil turned monk, Mr. Churchill must thank Lord Halifax in particular for this latest revelation of the monk's true sentiments.

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Women in Unrest, 1914-1918

BY BERYL STANLEY

THE WAR IS breaking up the old status of women in industry and in ordinary life. Factories where the workers had long and strenuously resisted dilution now have a growing quota of women workers. In thousands of working-class households women are taking over the responsibilities of the bread-winner, as well as their own. The idea that politics and trade unionism are a man's business, in which women have only a minor part to play, no longer fits the times.

The last war saw a tremendous political awakening of women, both industrial workers and housewives. During the latter part of the war the British workers were beginning to feel their strength. Despite the official ban on strikes under the Munitions Acts, these grew and spread, led by the shop stewards' movement, until in the first eight months of 1918 622,000 workers came out on strike, losing on the average over five days work each; and the movement reached greater heights in 1919 and 1920. In the actions of these years women were not merely friendly onlookers, but were drawn into the struggle, and showed powers of organisation and leadership which often surprised the men. So many of the problems of women in the war years are now reappearing that not only encouragement but practical help can be gained from studying them. The material here presented has no claim to be comprehensive, but it may be of interest to those facing similar problems to-day.

Exploitation of Women

The harsh conditions of war-time bore especially hard on the women. The housewife suffered from the excessive prices and maldistribution of food and the difficulty of procuring her lawful sugar ration, also from the appalling housing conditions in overcrowded areas, where the factory leaving certificate system compelled the workers to remain. The factory worker suffered from the relaxation of state restrictions on employment, which left her practically without state protection, until the 60-hour week was enforced in October, 1917. The 12-hour shift was normal for women munition workers, the 13- or 14-hour shift quite common. A case tried at Leeds in 1915 revealed that a girl under eighteen, employed by an engineering firm, had worked from 6 a.m. on Friday till 7 a.m. on Saturday, when she had an accident. An older woman worked from 6 a.m. on Friday till 11 a.m. on Saturday. The stipendiary magistrate dismissed the case on the grounds that the women were engaged in making cartridges. An inquest held at West Ham, on a woman who died of dope poisoning, revealed that she had been employed on dope varnishing for twelve hours a day, seven on Saturdays, until she died (*Labour Leader*, April 29, 1915; April, 20, 1916). The Health of Munition Workers

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Committee reported that women were found lying near the machines in their rest interval, too tired to go into the mess-room.

Factory conditions were often scandalous, since employers grudged introducing the extra accommodation for women. Their attitude was well summed up by "a steel director", reported in the *Engineer* (December 1, 1916), who said that in his opinion munition workers were being "mothered" a great deal too much; the time for pure philanthropy was over; canteens, hostels, etc., should be put upon a sound business footing, and if not found a reasonably profitable investment, quietly dropped.

Neither the armament firms nor the arbitration tribunals set up by the Government made allowance for the special needs of women in industry. The Commissioners reported that the fines inflicted by the tribunals were "excessive, and especially harsh on women", that "women particularly dislike the tribunals". *The Times* (January 15, 1917) reported instances of flagrant injustice to shy and inexperienced girls at the tribunals, and described the system by which women assessors were appointed to "mediate" between the women workers and the representatives of their employers. This proved to be an inadequate safeguard. The Commissioners recommended that women who came before the tribunals should always be allowed to see the woman assessor in private.

Even *The Times* has admitted recently that in the last war the Government treated the woman munition worker unfairly in regard to wages:

> Variations in rates were great, and the persistent endeavours of Miss Mary Macarthur, representing the organised women and working in close alliance with the men's unions, failed to secure anything like the apparent intention of the Treasury agreement. (Subsequently, as the costs of living rose, a number of advances in weekly pay were given by way of bonus.) Advances amounting to 23*s.* 6*d.* a week were given to men on various dates with a further bonus of 12½% for time and 7½% for piece workers; but the women's bonuses during the same period amounted only to 11*s.* a week, with no percentage increase at all. (*The Times*, April 19, 1940.)

By the end of the war the average wage for women in industry was about 32*s.* to 35*s.* Since the cost of living was higher than it is to-day, the standard was extremely low. Yet women in the engineering trade were in a relatively good position. In trades which had been sweated before the war, workers had far less protection and the rising cost of living added to the existing difficulties.

Wives and Mothers

The Commissioners on Industrial Unrest considered the working man's wife as a powerful influence of unrest among the men. They were proved right by the miners of Burnley, who struck against the maldistribution of food supplies and demanded a rationing scheme in January, 1918 (*Labour Gazette*). The wives of service men in rural areas showed a "deep feeling of resentment" against rising prices and low wages. A Poplar woman, who happened to get reported in *The Times* (March 3, 1916), was probably expressing the general feeling of Londoners when at a war savings conference she said from the back of the room that "the women of Poplar were always studying economy. How could a woman with five children save out of 30*s.* a week? The women

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were sick of darning and economising and finding when they got old that there was nothing for them but the workhouse or the miserable Government pension".

While the English wife grumbled, the Scottish would sometimes take direct action. The delays of the Board of Agriculture for Scotland, set up by the Small Landholders' Act of 1912, caused serious unrest in the Highlands. In 1918 only eleven men were settled in new holdings; in 1919 nearly 10,000 applications remained to be satisfied. In the spring of 1918, therefore, crofters began to make land raids on large estates, settling on land for which they had applied, without waiting for the findings of the Board. (See W. R. Scott "Scottish Land Settlement" in *Rural Scotland during the War*, Carnegie Trust, 1926.) A young woman at Portgower, whose husband was serving in the army, took her share in the local raid and gave a press reporter her reasoned defence of it. She was prepared to take the legal consequences of her action, she said; the disproportion between the large and small holdings was preventing the land from being used productively; her ancestors had held the pasture in question and been evicted (*Forward*, June 22, 1918).

At Dundee the soldiers' wives organised a big demonstration to demand increased separation allowances. When the Town Council refused an application from the L.R.C. secretary to take a street collection at their procession, the women were ready with counter measures.

> Suddenly the door burst open and the secretary demanded that a deputation from soldiers' wives should be received. "If you don't receive the deputation I am not responsible for what these women are going to do. . . . They will come in and shift you from your seats". The women forced their way in and rough-handled the Council officer. Half of his collar disappeared in the struggle; the women hung frantically on to his coat-tails, which they tore to fragments. . . . The Council Chamber presented a memorable scene. Three women held the floor. One amazon explained the case to the Bailie and his fellow members with much gesticulation and the Bailie, somewhat helplessly, could only reiterate that the Council had had no request to hear a deputation. He knew nothing about it. For the next quarter of an hour a number of women vented their grievances. Outside there was a waiting crowd of demonstrators, for the most part decent, well-dressed women.
>
> Fully 5,000 soldiers' wives took part in the procession.
>
> (*Forward*, August 10, 1918, quoting local press report.)

The best organised and most successful action by housewives was the rent strike at Glasgow in the autumn of 1915. It began among some boot operatives at Govan; then it was taken up and organised by the Committee of the Women's Housing Association. This had been formed about a year previously with a membership of only 50; by November 18 the membership had risen to nearly 3,000 women. The tenants also formed a women strikers' committee, which co-operated with vigilance committees formed by workers in the shipyards. The refusal of the press to report the strike made this co-operation essential. The local ward committees, labour and trades union organisations also supported the strikers; but it was stated that: "women are doing most of the work connected with the agitation and are doing it well. Their afternoon meetings are crowded and the audiences are being educated in a way that would have been impossible two months ago."

The strike opened with a procession of 2,000 women with their children, to support a deputation urging the Town Council to petition the government

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on their behalf. They demanded that rents should not be increased during the war, and that the families of soldiers and sailors should not be evicted. The women carried a banner saying: "Our husbands, sons and brothers are fighting the Prussians of Germany; we are fighting the Prussians of Glasgow." About a fortnight later, in foul weather, another procession of over 4,000 women and children marched from the outlying areas to the City Hall; four women speakers "roused the audience to fury by their quiet but strong indictment of the government's apathy". When some of the landlords obtained orders for eviction, women strikers prevented them from being carried out. Women gathered in crowds outside the houses whose tenants were threatened; one party forced a house factor "to draw his pen through the rent increases which he had intimated on their rent books"; women remained on duty all night as pickets, to prevent an empty house being occupied at the increased rent. Thanks to their energy 20,000 Glasgow householders went on strike. The climax came when the munition workers in five yards downed tools and marched to the Glasgow small debt court in protest. The evictions were postponed and pressure brought to bear on the Government. Meanwhile rent strikes had spread to Dundee, Paisley, Ayr, Aberdeen, Rutherglen, a little later to Cambuslang and Motherwell; in England there were rent strikes at Letchworth, and even at Birmingham, which gained a war-time reputation of being among the "least troublesome" industrial areas.

Already, at this early stage of the war, the women of Glasgow showed a revolutionary spirit. One woman speaker said that the women had learnt who their real enemies were. A woman who let lodgings to munition workers threatened to refuse to call them in the morning; others predicted a mutiny; their sons in the army would come back to defend their homes; mothers would not allow their sons to join up unless they had a guarantee that their homes would be protected against the landlords.* They kept up their activity, demonstrating against the high prices of food and fuel in 1916, and organising a women's platform for the 1917 May Day celebrations. The Glasgow housewives proved that women can be successfully organised even outside the factory.

Industrial Workers

The number of women employed in industry, transport and commerce rose by 1,320,000 between 1914-18. Of these over half a million entered the key industry of the country, the engineering and metal trades, about 40 per cent of them directly replacing men.

The woman worker in 1914 had to struggle against a long tradition of "cheap and docile" female labour. More than that, the trade union movement had immediately concluded an industrial truce on the outbreak of war; strikes and wage actions were thenceforth sporadic and unofficial. As conditions in industry became more difficult, the Government and the employers tightened their hold on the union leadership. First through the Treasury Agreement where strikes on war work were voluntarily abandoned, then through the Munitions of War Act (1916) which made strike action on war work illegal. The Government was never successful in stopping militant activity altogether, but throughout the war this activity was carried on by unofficial movements, based mainly on the shop-stewards' organisation, and

*A series of articles in the *Labour Leader*, October 14—November 25, 1915.

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not on the official leadership of the unions. Nevertheless, great successes were gained both in the union organisation of women and in drawing them into the struggle.

Before the war just over 2,000,000 women were employed in industry and commerce, but only 357,000 were in trade unions, and five in seven of these were in the textile unions. Nevertheless, the movement was rapidly growing; the largest all-women's union, the National Federation of Women Workers, led by Mary Macarthur was growing especially fast. The ideas of the "new unionism" (industrial organisation, embracing the less skilled workers for the first time) and the feminist movement, which reached its most intensive activity in these years, influenced the leaders of this women's movement, who were responsible for an energetic campaign for women's trade unionism in the war years.

The skilled men's unions in the munitions industry, then as now, did not organise women. The N.F.W.W., working in co-operation with the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, became in effect a women's engineering union, and raised its membership from 10,000 to 50,000. About another 60,000 women joined the General Workers' Union, and nearly as many the Workers' Union. In other trades, too, women's membership increased—in the clothing trades women's membership rose from 23,000 to 119,000. In all about 750,000 women entered the unions during the war—an increase of 160 per cent, and by January, 1919, one working woman in every five was organised.

Nor were the women merely card-holding members. The war at first slowed down trade disputes among women as among men. But as the war progressed women in clothing, transport, boots and shoes, textile and munition factories gradually became aware of their strength. In 1916 there were big cotton strikes and women's munition strikes at Leeds and Barrow, and by the middle of 1917 the militant trade union movement, and the women with it, was active in many disputes in engineering and other industries.

A strike of dyers and bleachers at Perth in September, 1917, gives a good illustration of women's co-operation with men workers at this time. After years of apathy, workers began to join their union in hundreds. A labour demonstration was held, "far surpassing anything of that nature which had been seen before in the city of Perth. *A feature of the procession was the number of women who took their places in the ranks*" (*Forward*, August 18, 1917). The refusal of Pullars' to recognise the union resulted in a strike, and mounted police were drafted into the town to deal with pickets. Women strikers joined eagerly in the struggle against blacklegs (*Forward* September 15, 1917). The strikers stayed out for nineteen days and gained bonuses of from 3*s.* to 5*s.* a week (*Labour Gazette*).

Women munition workers were involved in an increasing number of strikes, beginning in December, 1916, when the women of an electrical engineering factory struck against an arbitration award, joined the National Federation of Women Workers and were supported by the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. On returning to work they applied *en bloc* for their leaving certificates, bringing the case before the Munitions Tribunal, and finally obtained the statutory standard. The "first considerable strike of women munition workers, involving over 2,000, at Leeds in January, 1917, was followed by strikes all over the country in May" (G. D. H. Cole, *Economic Chronicle of the Great War*). *The Times* of July 7 reports that 2,000 girls at Newport

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returned to work pending negotiations; in November, 400 women struck at Glasgow (*Times*, November 21, 1917); at Coventry in December, "50,000 men and women workers were idle" (*Times*, December 1). One of the causes of the aircraft workers' strike of June-July, 1918, was the dismissal of a shop-stewardess (*Times*, July 10). "Unrest" among women munition workers was reported in August (*Times*, August 16), and Miss Macarthur told the press (*Times*, September 12):

> Recently in one big munition works the women took matters into their own hands. One afternoon in the works they began knitting socks and did so for two hours. The result was that their demands were conceded in twenty-hour hours.

On the signing of the Armistice from 5,000—6,000 women workers at Woolwich Arsenal decided to march to Whitehall, in protest against their dismissal without adequate safeguards. They carried a banner with the words: "Shall Peace bring us starvation?" Warned by the police that no processions were allowed within a mile of the precincts of the Houses of Parliament, they "intimated their intention of proceeding, whether processions were allowed or not". Miss Macarthur "wrung permission" from the Ministry of Munitions for the marchers to advance. She introduced twenty of the shop stewardesses to the Ministry, and after consultation was able to tell the women that she had obtained a month's holiday with pay for all women dismissed from munition works, with unemployment benefit of 25*s*. a week for men, 20*s*. for women, from November 25 (*Times*, November 20, 1918; *Mary Macarthur*).

Women in transport were the most independent of all. Seven women carriage cleaners employed at Old Oak Common went on strike in April, 1916, and so led the Executive of the National Union of Railwaymen to demand a war bonus for women from the G.W.R. (Cole and Arnot, *Trade Unionism on the Railways*, 1917). Men and women tramway workers struck for better wages and the non-employment of women drivers at Newport (*Times*, March 23, 1917). At the same time the women tram guards of Lancashire and Cheshire were threatening to strike for the men's war bonus (*Labour Leader*, March 22). Women conductors struck at Brighton (*Times*, June 27, 1917). Men and women on the Rawtenstall electric tramways struck for an equal increase for men and women; the same happened at Wallasey (*Times*, September 4 and 13, 1917) and Bradford (*Labour Gazette*, May, 1918). Women tram conductors at Liverpool struck in a dispute between rival unions; there were "lively scenes" when women conductors dragged the drivers off their trams; "an elderly man, who expressed sympathy with a driver molested by the women, had his face badly scratched and had to take refuge in a shop" (*Times*, July 10, 1918).

These local strikes ought to have prepared the public for the great stoppage in London of August, 1918. Owing to the swiftness of the strikers, however, it took the Londoners by surprise. All press reports dwell on their bewilderment when they woke up one Sunday morning to find no buses running. A *Times* leader described the strike as "infinitely worse in its effect on the public mind and temper than the most successful air raid" (August 20). The movement spread to Bath, Brighton, Hove, Bristol, Folkestone, Hastings, Weston-super-Mare; it seriously hindered the transport of munition workers. 11,000 workers on the London trams and buses were involved. The women were striking for the same increase as the men, and the men

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came out in sympathy; they were successful after a six-day strike, August 17-23; the tube workers won equal wages for men and women after a three-day strike, August 25-28 (*Economic Chronicle*). The women complained of a broken pledge by the companies and showed fierce determination to get their rights. One married woman at a strikers' meeting said that they were resisting the lowering of standards for their children (*Times*, August 26). It was observed that "if capitalists wished to revert to the law of the jungle" they would find the female worker more dangerous than the male (*Labour Leader*, August 29, 1918).

The strikes of the midinettes impressed Paris in the same way. In 1917 the dressmakers claimed an increase of a franc a day and a Saturday half-holiday. Women in other employments, electrical engineering, banks, restaurants, followed their example and forced a promise from the French Government (*Economist*, June 2, 1917). "The bourgeoisie were terrified as thousands of women marched down the grand boulevard shouting 'down with the war; give us back our men'" (*Labour Leader*, August 15, 1917). Another strike broke out in September, 1918. On September 29 a great meeting of French workers was called by the Seine Federation of Trade Unions, to protest against war profiteering, and here one speaker expressed the hopes which women's action had roused among the men. The workers, he said, should attack the cause of profiteering, which was the war, not waste their time in attacking its effects. He relied upon women, many of whom were then on strike, to attack the war, that through women the right to live might be won (*Labour Leader*, October 10, 1918).

After the war the increase in general union membership was held until the slump in 1921 and the retreat of the unions, which struck a heavy blow both to men's and women's membership. Since then trade unionism among women has not made the great strides that were needed; the numbers employed in peacetime industry were higher than before the war, but only one in nine was organised, largely in the general labour unions where their special problems were often not studied. The Labour movement conducted no great general campaign in the prosperous years before the present war in order to raise the standards and improve the conditions of the unskilled and lower-paid workers, and failed therefore to recruit women in great numbers. In 1939 the women's membership of unions affiliated to the Trade Union Congress was 550,000, compared with 352,000 in 1914 and 1,100,000 in 1919.

Nevertheless, the prospects for the organisation of women are in many ways better than in the last war. The craft prejudice in the unions is being broken down, and the fight for equal pay has already registered successes. What is needed is a concrete understanding of their needs, and confidence in the ability of women to become leaders in the struggle. The co-operation between men and women trade unionists in many aircraft and engineering factories shows that already the opportunity is being seized and women brought into the general fight.

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